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Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an award-winning interdisciplinary biblical, theological, and practical journal of the Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston;
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way);
- c. Christian scholarship that reflects an evangelical perspective, as an affiliate of GCTS-Boston. This is an interdisciplinary journal that publishes high quality articles in areas such as biblical studies, theology, church history, religious research, case studies, and studies related to practical issues in urban ministry. Special issues are organized according to themes or topics that take seriously the contextual nature of ministry situated in the cultural, political, social, economic, and spiritual realities in the urban context.

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who have or are in (or are reviewed by a professor in) a Th.M., M.Div., Ed.D., Th.D., S.T.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree program.

Two issues normally are published per year.

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Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around A.D. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around A.D. 231–233. In A.D. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (*ANF* 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Julius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

Other Front Matter

Editorial Team for the issue: Ruth Martin, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

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Summary of Content:

This issue is concerned with issues of ethnicity, women, images, preaching, biblical doctrines, interpretation, and application.

THE AFRICANUS GUILD



L to R: Quonekuia Day, Mark Chuanhang Shan, Jennifer Creamer

“If not for the Africanus Guild, I would not even think of getting a Ph.D. and would not have had the chance to teach my own course at Gordon-Conwell, and be trained to be a Bible teacher, and for this I am most grateful.” –Benjamin Fung

Benjamin Fung’s Ph.D. was received from North-West University in South Africa 2017
Quonekuia Day and Mark Shan are Ph.D. candidates with London School of Theology.
Jennifer Creamer received her Ph.D. from North-West University in 2016.

The Africanus Guild is a support program set up to assist selective, underrepresented constituencies to pursue research Ph.D.s from North-West University and London School of Theology. The Guild is especially oriented to the multicultural, multiracial urban scene. Accepted students are mentored by a Gordon-Conwell faculty member. Candidates may complete the Th.M. at the Boston campus and then apply to the Guild.

Taino Myths and the Early Revelations of the Bible

ROBERT WAROKUIA FELIX

Native Americans had a thriving moral and spiritual life before AD 1492. The forced transition from their natural life to an artificial life of “civilization” was what made them resentful of European Christianity. As Charles Eastman explains: “Those of us who listened to the preaching of the missionaries came to believe that the white man alone had a real God, and that the things which the Indian had previously held sacred were inventions of the devil. This undermined the very foundations of our philosophy. It very often did so without substituting the Christian philosophy, not because the innate qualities of the Christian philosophy were unworthy, but because the inconsistent behavior of its advocates made it hard for us to accept or understand.”¹ Because there are over 500 different nations of indigenous people in the Americas who were faced with this dilemma, the best approach to understand their viewpoint will be to analyze the foundational myths and beliefs of the Tainos, the people who first encountered Columbus. After an introduction to the Tainos, I will show that many of their myths are strangely reminiscent of early biblical accounts like the creation, the fall, the flood, the fall of Satan, and the birth of Jesus.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TAINOS

The word “Taino” means “the good people.” At the time of contact, Columbus wrote “...I believe there is no better race or better land in the world. **They love their neighbors as themselves**, and they have the softest and gentlest voices in the world, and they are always smiling.”² The love the Tainos had for their neighbors prompted Columbus to remember the comment of Jesus Christ about the greatest command in the law, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: *You must love your neighbor as yourself*. On these two commandments hang the whole law, and the Prophets too.”³ Columbus stated early in his journal “they are a people very free from wickedness and unwarlike...”⁴ Such was the Taino way of life.

The Tainos love for all things informed their understanding of their natural surroundings. José Barreiro noted the Taino community was structured “toward a sustainable interaction with the natural surroundings.” The Tainos had a peaceful way of life that is now called “eco-systemic.” “Eco-systemic” comes from the word “ecosystem” which is “a system formed by an ecological community and its environment that functions as a unit.”⁵ Barreiro continues, “the production and harvesting of food from sea, land, and forests were esteemed human activities among Tainos. As with other indigenous cultures, the sophistication and sustainability of agricultural and natural harvesting systems was an important value and possibly the most grievous loss caused by the conquest of the Americas. The contrast is direct with the Spanish (and generally Western) value that to work with land or nature directly, as a farmer and/or harvester, was a lowly activity, thus relegated to lesser humans and lower classes. This attitude is ingrained in popular thinking in most Western countries... In that tradition, the least desirable thing is to work with your hands.”⁶ José Barreiro noted that, “In the wake of recent scientific revelations about the cost of high impact technologies upon the natural world, a culture such as the Taino, that could feed several million people without permanently wearing down its surroundings, might command higher respect.”⁷

1 Charles Alexander Eastman, *The Soul of an Indian and Other Writings from Ohiyesa* (Charles Alexander Eastman), The Classic Wisdom Collection (San Rafael, CA: New World Library, 1993), page 50.

2 Lionel Cecil Jane, trans., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus* (New York, Bramhall, 1960), page 124.

3 Matthew 22:37-40 New Jerusalem Bible. All future quotations are from the NJB, unless otherwise noted.

4 Jane, transl., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, page 57.

5 <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ecosystem>.

6 José Barreiro, “A Note on Tainos: Whither Progress?,” *Northeast Indian Quarterly* (Fall 1990), page 69.

7 Ibid.

Barreiro continues to state that “American indigenous peoples and their systems of life have been denigrated and mis-perceived. Most persistent of European ethnocentrism toward Indians is the concept of ‘the primitive,’ always buttressed with the rule of ‘least advanced’ to ‘most advanced’ imposed by the prism of Western civilization...”⁸

TAINO RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND SOCIAL ORDER

Columbus reported that Tainos are “so guileless and so generous with all that they possess, that no one would believe it who has not seen it. They refuse nothing that they possess, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite any one to share it and display as much love as if they would give their hearts.”⁹

How could these people, not having heard of Jesus Christ or his teachings, live the Christian ethic? The Antillean islands were far removed from any “civilized” nation. So, how could the Tainos, in essence, live the “beatitudes” found in the Bible? Simply put, they were able to practice the law found in their hearts.

The apostle Paul in the letter to the Romans addresses the gentiles and the special revelation they received from God: “For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them, since God has made it plain to them: ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and his everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind’s understanding of created things” (Rom 1:19-20). José Barreiro, himself a Taino, noted that the Taino culture may have appeared “primitive” to the early invaders, “yet it prescribed a lifestyle that strove to feed all the people, and a spirituality that respected, in ceremony most of their main animal and food sources, as well as the natural forces like climate, season, and weather. The Taino lived respectfully in a bountiful place and so their own nature was bountiful.”¹⁰

In contrast, the people brought by Columbus were the opposite. The apostle Paul continues to say that some of the people to whom God has revealed himself “did not honor him as God” and “that they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an imitation...” He goes on to say that “God abandoned them to degrading passions...unnatural practices...unacceptable thoughts and indecent behavior...” and that they “are steeped in all sorts of injustice, rottenness, greed and malice; full of envy, murder, wrangling, treachery and spite...enemies of God...” (Rom 1:21-30). The latter group mentioned by Paul cannot be confused with the Tainos, who would give anything you asked of them, and would, when offering food to anyone, do so “with much love.”¹¹ For confirmation of this contrast, look no further than the writings of eyewitness Bartolomé de las Casas in his account *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* published by Penguin Books, 1992. Bartolomé de las Casas represented the interests of Christ and stands as an example that not all Europeans were guilty of these atrocities.

Columbus was familiar with the teachings of Christ and was overwhelmed when he saw them genuinely put into practice by the Tainos. Columbus even goes as far as to say that “in *his* opinion, there are no better people...”¹² They may not have known that someone named Jesus said this or that; all they knew was that the invisible creator was gracious to them and would reward them for their behavior. As Paul the apostle states, “For the ones that God will justify are not those who have heard the Law but those who have kept the Law. So, when gentiles, not having the Law, still through their own innate sense behave as the Law commands, then, even though they have no Law, they are a law for themselves. They can demonstrate the effect of the Law engraved on their hearts, to which their own conscience bears witness; since they are of various considerations, some of which accuse them, while others provide them with a defense... on the day when, according

8 Ibid.

9 Jane, trans., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, page 194.

10 Barreiro, “A Note on Tainos: Whither Progress?,” *Northeast Indian Quarterly*, page 66.

11 Jane, trans., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, page 194.

12 Jane, trans., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, page 124.

to the gospel I preach, God, through Jesus Christ, judges all human secrets” (Rom 2:13-16). The invisible God did reveal himself to those outside his covenant. God’s persona and his laws by which humanity was to abide showed clearly through his created order. Therefore, Taino myths are almost always about sinful behavior which should never be emulated.

José Barreiro describes Taino religious ceremonial preparations this way, “the Tainos were a disciplined people. Particularly during their spiritual and healing ceremonies, natural impulses were limited. In those important instances, strong abstinence over sexual activity and eating were demanded, even under penalty of death. The local *cacique* (chief) and his medicine man, the Taino *behique* had the task of calling the ceremonial times.”¹³ This activity brings to memory David, when fleeing from Saul, goes to Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. David was in need of food but Ahimelech answered, “I have no ordinary bread to hand; there are only consecrated loaves of permanent offering (*to God*) - provided that the men have kept themselves from women” (1 Sam 21:4).

Since there were no written documents apart from pictographs in cave walls or on standing stones in the plazas, the *areitos* (sacred celebrations including ceremonial dances and songs) served as their church service by which oral tradition was recited and enacted. The central plaza of the town was selected as a cemetery, establishing it as a sacred place where communal ceremonies and festivals, as well as routine domestic tasks, were performed. The plaza was surrounded by pictographs which told the story of creation as well as other Taino myths of exemplary virtue or courage. They helped to reinforce Taino morality and gave a sense of sacredness to these ceremonies.

Such celebrations and sacred ceremonies showed the universe of beliefs that were at the center of everything these island people did and thought. The term *areito* is related to the Taino word for “remembrance” and “to recall.” Ramon Pane, the friar, who was sent by Columbus to learn the Taino language, wrote down many of the traditions and ancient stories which “those of high rank” celebrated in ceremonies. Friar Pane suggests that the main purpose of the feast with its songs and dances “was to bring back to mind and heart everything that gave the people their roots on the earth.” José Barreiro adds in that important ceremony “a tribal meditation and vision took place, often with the use of the sacred herb, cohoba, a hallucinogenic snuff compounded from the seeds of *anadenanthera peregrina*.”¹⁴

The Spanish chronicler, Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes, tells of the major role the *areitos* played: “Their songs, those they called their *areitos*, are their books and memorials, transmitted from generation to generation, from fathers to sons, and from those who are alive today to those who will arrive... In their principle feasts or to celebrate a victory over their enemies, or when a *cacique* was married, or at any occasion in which one looked for pleasure... And up to now they keep alive their *areitos* as they do not want to forget their own stories...”

Zemis were representations of the spiritual forces which shaped Taino cosmology. They ranged from representations of *Yucabú*, the Taino supreme deity, to the many spirits that they believed influenced their world. The parallel is seen in the Psalms, “God takes his stand in the divine assembly, surrounded by the gods he gives judgement” (Ps 82:1). There were ceremonies for the season of the *Hurucan* (hurricane), which they viewed as the twisted one, the disruptor of the natural order, their Satan. The Tainos had an *arieto* and singing for the four beings of the four corners. Revelation 7:1 speaks of the four angels at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds. Tainos celebrated the origin of the sun and moon, as in Genesis 1:14-19. Tainos celebrated the ocean and the fish, as in Genesis 1:9-10 and 20-21. *Yucca*, pronounced *yoo-ka*, a potato like starch, the primary food source for the Taino food, was considered a special gift from the Creator, *Yucabú*, the God of spirits (gods).

13 Barreiro, “A Note on Tainos: Whither Progress?,” *Northeast Indian Quarterly*, page 69-70.

14 Ibid.

At the celebrations, carved wooden *zemis*, representing the various forces, were polished and dressed up. Many aspects of Taino religion were bound to their craftsmanship. The most important and, indeed, the most valued were the three-pointed stone *zemis*. These *zemis* were triangular objects. Many are of dense, hard stone, which the Taino regarded as precious because of its color, grain, or suggestive pattern. In many instances, the natural attributes of the selected raw stone appear to have predetermined the image carved by the sculptor. One of the most important qualities of Taino art, especially apparent among three-pointers, is that it seems simultaneously to have significance on several levels. Their powers were associated with all aspects of the Tainos' daily and cosmological activities.



Fig. 1

Plain three-pointed *zemis* are so numerous that historians are convinced they represent the supreme being of the Taino people, *Yucahu*. The three-pointers are like the cross worn around the neck in Christian culture.

Such *zemis* symbols have been found in Venezuela and Columbia as well as at the Saladoid sites of the people who preceded the Tainos. The three-pointer representing the supreme creator in Taino cosmology reminds the Christian of the three-fold nature of God who is represented by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (e.g., Matt 28:19). Fray Bartolomé de las Casas describes the Taino supreme being this way, "The

people of the island of Hispaniola had a certain faith in and knowledge of a one true God, who was immortal and invisible, for none can see him, who had no beginning, whose dwelling place and residence is heaven, and they called him *Yocahu Vagua Maorocoti*."¹⁵

By the time of Columbus' arrival, the Tainos were no longer a people that came from the mainland of South America. They had truly become islanders. They themselves believed that they were **created** on the island they called *Kiskeya*, which was their Eden and Columbus later renamed Hispaniola (modern Dominican Republic and Haiti). Their everyday lives were centered around the ocean, the mountains, the stars, and the interaction of all these elements. They were keen observers of the rhythms of nature, for they felt it was only through such knowledge that they could anticipate what the future had in store for them and develop strategies to handle natural events successfully.

The Taino recognized that there was an inherent tendency toward disorder in their cosmos and that a lot of energy must be expended either to maintain, promote, or restore stability and order in it. Not all destructive forces were seen as the products of nature; some are also the results of one's own actions or those of other human beings. "Sins," such as war, the violation of sexual taboos, the breaking of laws, and a myriad of similar circumstances could also throw the Taino universe into chaos. A great many of their rituals and ceremonies were designed precisely to deal with disorder and to produce social integration.

Like other indigenous peoples, the Taino had an involved economic life. They could trade throughout the Caribbean and had systems of governance and beliefs that maintained harmony

¹⁵ Fatima Bercht, Estrellita Brodsky, John Alan Farmer, and Dicey Taylor, eds., *TAINO Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, El Museo Del Barrio (New York: Monacelli, 1998), page 175.

between human and natural environments. Concerning the Taino system of government and daily organization, Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas wrote, “The Indians have much better judgment and maintain much better public order and government than many other nations which are overwhelmingly proud of themselves and which hold Indians in contempt.” He reported, the people were organized to tend gardens or to fish in the sea or to hunt. They had ball games played in *bateyes*, or courtyards, in front of the *cacique’s* (chief’s) house. They held both ceremonial and social dances, during which their creation stories and other cosmologies were recited. Among the few Taino customs that have survived the longest, the predominant ideas agree that ancestors should be properly greeted by the living humans (see Heb 12:1) at prescribed times and that natural forces and the spirits behind each group of food and medicinal plants and useful animals should be appreciated in ceremony.

CREATION MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF THE TAINOS RELATED TO GENESIS

Like many cultures, the Tainos had specific beliefs about creation. Myths, which were derived from belief in *Yucahu*, were essential in showing what the community’s role was in the cosmos. Taino “myths” are not merely primitive superstitions with no basis in reality. They were and are the fabric and framework of tribal society told in such a way that the real events that inspired them shaped into true parables (their “bible”) serving not only to remind them of their origins but to direct them to a good future. Myths connect the Tainos to characters from a “primordial cosmos” who were challenged with the trials and temptations that are found in everyday life. They tell the moral story of what is expected of them, as “the good people,” and what is needed to be done to be a viable part of society.

These sacred myths are often expressed as being an “inverse” of the ordinary and concrete world. The night (the absence of light), when humans ordinarily sleep, is the appropriate time for the “awakening” of supernatural forces. It is the moment when the ordinary physical world is more susceptible to experience the numinous powers of the universe, from ghosts and *zemis* to mythical personages and spiritual beings. As with all societies, there are forces that should not be sought though they are real. The struggle of good against evil exists and has been since the beginning of time and there is the danger of dark forces infiltrating the pure and simple message of the Creator.

Most historians believe that these mythic stories operate on two levels. First, they explain the origins of the Taino world and provide supernatural justification for the social order. Second, they show how spirits (or *zemis*) interact with humans on a daily basis through their control over the natural and supernatural worlds.

The most ancient and revered story among the Tainos is the myth of the creation of the oceans: There was a man called *Yahyah*, whose name no one knows. His son, *Yayael*, was ostracized for wanting to kill his father. Thus, *Yayael* was banished for four months. Afterwards (upon *Yayael’s* return) his father killed him, and placed his bones inside a gourd and hung it from the roof of the house, where it remained for some time. One day, wishing to see his son, *Yahyah* ordered his wife, “I wish to see our son *Yayael*.” Filled with joy, she took down the gourd and emptied it to see the bones of her son. From the gourd many large and small fish gushed out. Seeing that the bones were transformed into fish, they resolved to eat them.

The story continues, hungry, *Deminan Caracaracol*, (who found he could communicate with the gods and became the first shaman) and his (three twin) brothers entered *Yahyah’s* house to eat (steal) food because they were hungry. As they ate from the gourd where *Yayael’s* bones were placed, *Deminan* sensed that *Yahyah* was returning to his house from the *conucos* (gardens). While hastily trying to hang up the gourd back on the roof, *Deminan* did not secure it well, and thus it fell onto the ground and broke. So much water came out of the gourd that it covered all the earth, and from it many fish came out. This is how the ocean was created.

A second version of this myth is recounted by Pietro Martire d'Anghier: "They say there was in ancient times on the island a powerful man called *Yahyah*. When his only son died, he put him into a squash instead of a sepulcher. A few months later, impatient because of his son's death, *Yahyah* went to see the squash again; and when he had opened it, enormous whales and great cetaceans came out, whereby he informed certain neighbors that the sea was enclosed in the squash. Attracted by the rumor, four young brothers, born from the same birth in which their mother had died, went to the squash in the hope of getting fish and took it in their hands. *Yahyah*, who frequently returned to see his son's bones enclosed there, was then arriving and the young men were frightened. Caught in the sacrilege and under suspicion of theft, since they respected *Yahyah*, they dropped the squash so as to flee more quickly and, because of the excess weight, it broke. The sea spilled out through the cracks, the valleys filled up; that vast surface occupied by all that dry world of the island came under water, and the only parts spared from the flood, because of their altitude, were the mountains that form the islands we can see now."

Let us first examine the name *Yahyah* given to the main character of the story. "Yah" is a Taino expression meaning a strong or vital spirit. *Yahyah*, therefore, is a "being" that goes beyond the norm of humanity (similar to Yahweh in the biblical record, both in name and character as "Lord" or creator or ruler of the people). He is none other than the supreme deity of the Tainos: *Yucahu Bagua Maorocoti*. In one story, *Yahyah* has a wife and in the other he does not. You can see that the story is hinting back to two separate events. *Yahyah* is the God of Eden as well as Adam. Both are the noble man of ancient times, whose son died, providing the framework for this story. Taino stories, as well as the majority of Native American legends, often incorporated a human story within a divine story.

What is important to notice is that these two very similar creation stories operate in much the same way that the book of Genesis' two creation stories function. One is an overview, while the other focuses in on more detailed information not presented in the first.

In the first account of the Taino creation story, we have *Yahyah*, the most vital and powerful of all spirits in conflict with his son. In finding the ancient message in this myth, we must go to the Old Testament book of Genesis. There God creates man out of the ground (Gen 2:7). The man was, in essence, the "son of God." This is attested to in the Gospel of Luke, where Adam is referred to as "the son of God" (Luke 3:38). The Taino story goes on to say that *Yahyah* banished *Yayael* (which means "son of *Yahyah*," or, more literally, "son of God") for wanting to kill him. The understanding here is that *Yayael* wanted to remove his father as *cacique* (chief of the created order) and take his place unlawfully. He wanted to be equal to his father. This story has a parallel in Genesis. The serpent says to the woman in Genesis 3:5, "God knows in fact that the day you eat it (the fruit) your eyes will be opened and you will be like God." Wanting to oust the creator is a central transgression that leads to the fall of humanity in both stories. In the Taino myth, *Yayael* is banished, much like Adam and Eve from the garden, but then he returns in order to remove his father, which results in his being put to death. Adam and Eve are warned about eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God tells the man in Genesis 2:17, "The day you eat of that, you are doomed to die." In the Taino myth, the rebellious son is killed for his transgression and his bones are placed in a gourd and hung in the rafters of the *bohio* (house). *Yahyah* longs to see the bones of his dead son, and, in a way, is sorry for him. He brings down the gourd and empties it only to find that the bones have turned into fish (the early symbol of Christianity), which *Yahyah* decides to eat. Even though the son is dead, he is still able to bring forth life. Adam and Eve were removed from the garden; they were in a sense "dead" and later they did indeed die. Even so, they were able to populate the earth with people and were still able to bring forth life and especially bring forth the savior Jesus.

Yayael could also refer to Satan, whose sin was "wanting to be like the most high." Isaiah speaks about the fall of the "Daystar, son of the dawn":

“How did you come to fall from the heavens,
 Daystar, son of the dawn?
 How did you come to be thrown to the ground,
 conqueror of nations?
 You who used to think of yourself:
 I shall scale the heavens;
 higher than the stars of God
 I shall set my throne.
 I shall sit on the Mount of Assembly
 far way to the north.
 I shall climb high above the clouds,
 I shall rival the Most High.
 Now you have been flung down to Sheol,
 Into the depths of the abyss!” (Isa 14:12-15)

In fact, with the differing Taino accounts of the creation of the oceans and sea life, *Yayael* could represent Adam (the son of God) or Satan (the rebellious creation of God) or even Jesus, the Son of God as “He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him” (John 1:2-3). Tainos like to weave stories together, but that does not mean that a central character is necessarily the brother of the other parallel characters in the story. Let me point out that *Deminan* and his twin three brothers could be a signal that the one character in the story is being used in three different representations. This is consistent with the way thousands of pieces of Taino art depict several stories utilizing only one image. Taino stories and art are known for depicting one narrative or one image, but, when you turn that image or story upside down, you have another image or story interwoven into the first. Turn it to the side and you have a third image or story. This can clearly be seen in Taino stone, coral, wood, and ceramic work. Tainos love to weave several themes into one piece of art or have several stories interacting in what appears to be a single narrative.

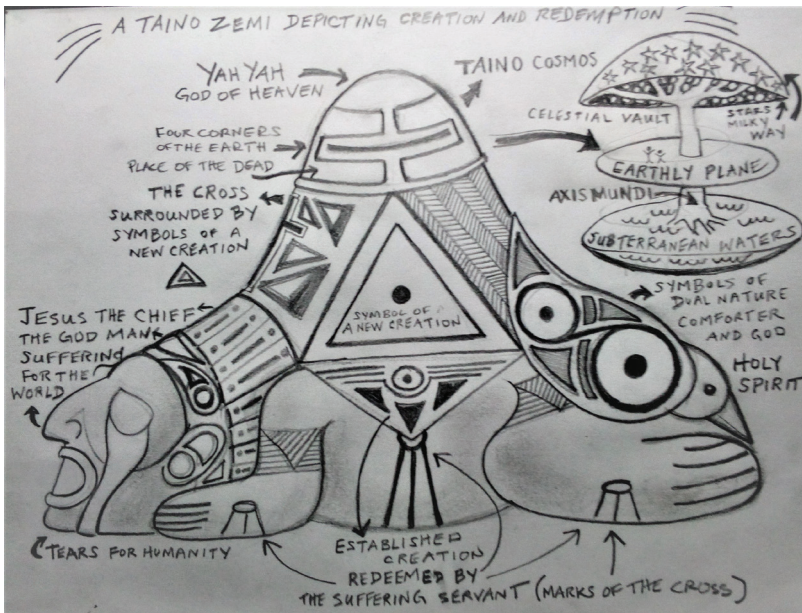


Fig. 2.

created and drawn by Robert Warokuia Felix

In the second part of the first version of the myth, you have *Deminan* and his (three twin) brothers who enter *Yahyah*’s house to eat food. Here *Deminan* tries to steal something that belongs to *Yahyah*. *Deminan* wants the “sacred” fish, Eve wanted the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Satan wanted to rival Yahweh, again, another three in one parallel. And so, *Deminan* becomes another symbol of a rebellious son. His sin (and the sin of the three brothers) leads to a flood

that covers the earth, much like the sins of the “sons of God” as well as humanity, in Genesis 6:1-7, which rise up to God, who, in turn, wipes them out with a flood. The sequence of events in the Taino myth is surprisingly close to the sequencing of the Genesis account. In general, there are five main points that illustrate that these ancient stories are related:

- “In the beginning God...,” *Yahyah* the Great Spirit exists and acts;
- Rebellion against God: Someone coveting his supreme position as ruler over creation;
- A sin of eating something which leads to a type of death;
- The results of sin which bring a flood that covers the entire earth;
- Expulsion from Paradise or the Garden.

Because of the overwhelming similarities, it is clear that Genesis and Taino stories seem to come from a similar source (real events) in human history and prehistory. For example, *Deminan* “sensed” *Yahyah* returning from walking in the garden, similar to Adam and Eve hearing God as he walks in the garden at the cool of the day. *Deminan* and his brothers fleeing from *Yahyah*’s house are a type of Adam and Eve fleeing from Yahweh’s presence (Gen 3.8).

The changes from the original biblical story are due to thousands of years of native oral tradition, migration, and interactions altering the retelling of God’s revelation passed down through the ages. Remember what Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes stated, “Their songs, in those they called their *areitos*, are their books and memorials, transmitted from generation to generation, from fathers to sons, and from those who are alive today to those who will arrive. And up to now they keep alive their *areitos* as they do not want to forget their own stories.” Thus, Tainos would coordinate their religious understanding from general revelation with the memory of specific understanding from primal incidents at the dawn of humanity. And so all civilizations carry the true story handed down from the sons of Noah, and during the dispersion of nations the true stories became myth and then transform into the understanding of the local society or community.

In the second version of the same myth, *Yahyah*’s son dies. There is no rebellion and *Yahyah* is in anguish at the loss of his son. When he checks the “squash” which holds the bones of his dead son, he notices many marine animals. Instead of death, *Yahyah* finds living things. The death of his son brings life to the ocean and all that derive strength from it. This story is similar, but, in a sense, completely different from the first. The unnamed “youth and his brothers” that come to steal are said to be “caught in the sacrilege.” How is stealing food sacrilegious when you are hungry? It becomes sacrilegious when the food you are stealing belongs to God. These fish in the squash represent the fruit found on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in God’s garden. But, even more than that, the rebellious steal the squash which holds the dead son of *Yahyah*, *Yayael*. Therefore, his sacred bones, have been touched by unworthy people. People who have not prepared themselves to be in their creator’s presence commit sacrilege by approaching a holy God with unclean hearts. Like people standing before a judge, they have to be invited to approach the bench.

Yayael’s bones have the power to create life. In this case, *Yahyah*’s son can be equated to the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The first Adam fell in disobedience. The second Adam died as an obedient sacrifice and life came about by his death.

The second focus of the Taino story is the flood: The sea spilled out through the cracks in the gourd, and the valleys filled up; that vast surface occupied by all that dry world of the island came under water, and the only parts spared from the flood, because of their altitude, were the mountains that form the islands we can see now.

The myth works well in telling the redemptive story of the death of the son of God, the other major intent was to give more details about the universal flood. The myth goes out of its way to mention that the only parts spared from the flood, because of their altitude, were the mountains.

Though it is not exactly the same as the flood story found in Genesis chapter 7, it is interesting to note that the Genesis story also speaks about the mountains: “The waters rose higher and higher above the ground until all the highest mountains under the whole of heaven were submerged. The water reached their peak fifteen cubits above the submerged mountains” (Gen 7:19-20).

What a strange detail to include, to emphasize mountains are not covered in one account and mountains are covered by fifteen cubits in another. The Taino story is clearly alluding to the same account found in Genesis, though, through thousands of years of oral tradition, the story had changed to accommodate the island setting. A common belief among the Tainos, especially in Puerto Rico, was that *Yahyah* lived in the tallest mountains of the Caribbean islands. In Puerto Rico that would be El Yunque, the rain forest and mountain region. It would then make sense that the mountains where *Yahyah* lives would not be under water.

YUCAHU AND JESUS

In the myths related so far, we have witnessed the use of natural phenomena, to define the social order among the Tainos. Interwoven within these stories are ancient stories, whose origin goes back to prehistorical times. Many of these myths appear repeatedly in the Taino material culture, for example, carved on the wooden seats of the *cacique*. Artifacts such as these, along with those of stone, bone, and shell which represent the ancestry, or a religious aspect of an individual or a community, have been found in Taino and even earlier in the pre-Taino Saladoid burial sites (the Saladoid expansion began around 400 B.C). The presence of such gifts at these burial sites strongly suggests a belief in an afterlife. So in essence the stories are returned to the one who gave them, *the creator*, of whom the legends say: He is in the heaven, he is immortal; nobody can contemplate him. He has a mother but he has no beginning. His name is *Yucahu*, *Bagua*, *Maorocoti*, and the name of his mother is *Atabey*. *Yucahuguama Bagua Maorocoti*, the “supreme being” in Taino cosmology, has a triple name meaning “one who brings the *yucca*, or Lord of *Yucca*,” “ruler of the sea” and “is without ancestral grandfathers,” born of woman only. Therefore, *Yucahuguama* is the “first force *yucca* giver-sea-provider-of woman born without grandfathers, already existed and had accomplished his main labor on the earth...” Being named the God of *yucca* affirmed *Yucahu* as the ultimate source of subsistence. He was also God of the sea which was another source of life. Turtles, crabs, fish, manatees all played an important role in the diet of the Tainos, who had no substantial sources of protein on the island. The myth of the creation of the oceans clearly shows that *Yahyah/Yucahu* is the prime mover in the creation of the oceans.

Taino culture had a matriarchal descent system. William Keegan notes: “In practice, matriarchal descent was expressed in the inheritance of rank (social position or class) through the female line. The Tainos called both the spirits and the icons that represented the spirits *zemis*. One form of *zemi*, composed of representations of the lineage’s ancestors, was passed through the female line. Women are also reported to have been both the producers and distributors of certain high-status goods (for example, wooden stools, household objects, and a thousand things of cotton).¹⁶

An interesting note is that the female line carries the family heritage. Mary the mother of Jesus provides the lineage that would grant Jesus the throne of David, his ancestor. This Taino “hymn” recognizes *Yucahu* being born of a woman and so is legitimately the heir and chief of the world. The story of Genesis also mentions a woman, Eve, giving birth to a child that would bruise the head of the serpent who brought chaos to the world; Eve and Mary being the same as *Atabey*. This idea continues throughout the Bible and notably in the book of Isaiah, the prophet states: “the young woman is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel (*God with us*).” Isaiah goes on to say in another passage: “For a son has been born for us, a son has been given to us, and dominion has been laid on his shoulders; and this is the name he has been given,

16 William F. Keegan, *The People Who Discovered Columbus: The Prehistory of the Bahamas* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), page 102.

‘Wonderful-Counselor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace,’ to extend his dominion in boundless peace, over the throne of David and over his kingdom to make it secure and sustain it in fair judgment and integrity” (Isa 7:14; 9:6-7).

It is possible that the almighty Creator revealed this truth to the Taino, just as Paul indicated, God being able to communicate with the nations through the natural order. It could have been revealed through direct revelation or prophecy or an ancient account from Genesis speaking through the Taino creator story. To illustrate this possibility it is important to note that the Spanish invasion had already been prophesied among the Tainos years earlier.

Las Casas recounts the prophecy: “Returning to the subject of the *cacique* or lord who had begun that fast, they said it was public knowledge, that, when he spoke with a certain *zemi* whose name was *Yucahuguama*, he had told him that those who were alive after his death would enjoy his lands and house little time, because a clothed people would come who would conquer and kill them and they would die of hunger. Thenceforward they believed those people must have been those whom we call Caribes, and at that time they called them cannibals.”²⁶ Ramon Pane adds to this in retelling the same account because the Taino saw that the Admiral and his men fit this prophecy more closely. “...they thought at first that the people in question must be the cannibals; but later, seeing that the cannibals just took things and fled, they believed that it must be other people the *zemi* referred to. Whence they now believe that he referred to the Admiral and those the Admiral brought with him.”¹⁷

The Tainos realized too late that *Yucahu*, the supreme creator, was telling them to beware of the Spanish visitors. Their enemies, the Caribs, would attack and leave, never causing the vast destruction mentioned in the prophecy. The prophecy was understood too late to save that generation completely.

In a similar way, in light of the true, fulfilled prophecies, it is possible that God revealed to the Taino that *Yucahu* (God, son of God and savior) would be born of a woman. The peoples that would later be known as the Tainos entered the Antilles around the time of the birth of Christ. Tainos are not the only gentiles to receive direct revelation. The New Testament records other gentiles with knowledge of the birth of the King of the earth: “After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judea during the reign of King Herod, suddenly some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east asking, ‘Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage... Herod said, ‘Go and find out all about the child, and, when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.’ Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and, going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did **him** homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. *But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way*” (Matt 2:1-3, 7-12).

If these wise men were Jews or of Jewish descent, they would have at least known about the Micah prophecy or where the town of Bethlehem was. The prophet Daniel could have instructed the magicians of Persia about the King of the Jews. The word “magician” comes from “Magi.” And so living as a Magi would mean they would be trained to understand signs in the sky and receive the revelation about the star which would lead them to the child King. Also of note is that the origin of this myth of *Yucahu* being born of a woman is contemporary with the events in the Matthew passage. Thus, divine revelation to gentiles is possible and, in these cases, demonstrable.

The use of the names of *Yucahu* and *Yahyah* for the same deity is much like Yahweh, in the Old

¹⁷ Bercht, Brodsky, Farmer, and Taylor, eds., *TAINO Pre-Columbian Art*, page 179.

Testament, telling Moses that Abraham knew him but not by the name Yahweh, but as *El Shaddai*, God Almighty. Also, the use of *Yahyah*, strongest and most vital of spirits, seems to parallel “I am that I am...” *Yahyah* is the correct pronunciation of the Taino supreme, immortal, invisible being. In Hebrew we have *Yah* (as in *HaleluYah*) the supreme, immortal, invisible being. How could the Tainos know the name of the Hebrew God? Through divine revelation given to the Taino in ancient times or through oral tradition from the sons of Noah.

The name of the son of God in Taino myth is *Yayael*. To the student of the Hebrew language “Yael” means “Yah is God.” *Yayael* or *Yahyael* is *son of YahYah*, and the “ah” is seen in the Bible as giving life, such as in from Sarai to Sarah and from Abram to Abraham. It is the Creator’s identification as the giver of breath to all humanity and new life to the living. The most direct evidence of this is “Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and *blew the breath* of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). “Living being” in Hebrew is *nephesh chayah*, a living spirit or living creature. Once again we see that the breath of Yah adds the “ah” and makes a person alive. Jesus Christ our Lord also gives new life to his disciples as described in the Gospel of John, “After saying this he *breathed* on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

“Jesus” means “Yahweh saves”; “of Nazareth” indicates “earthly” and “branch” and “Messiah” means “chosen or anointed one,” born of woman only. It becomes clear that the supreme God of the earth decided to announce to all humanity the birth of his son Jesus, King, to the Jews, the gentile Magi afar off, and the Taino even further off.

CONCLUSION

The Taino myths indicate they had heard the truth of the immortal God Yah. And when the priests arrived with Columbus and began to share the message of Jesus, the message resonated. “As one early *cacique* on what is now called Cuba told Columbus, ‘This ceremony (the mass) is very good, because it seems to me you are giving thanks to God by means of it.’”¹⁸ Years later the Native American still identifies with the one who, lifted up, draws all people to himself. Charles Eastman told the story of an old warrior who was listening to a discussion about Jesus and Christianity and said, “I have come to the conclusion that Jesus was an Indian. He was opposed to material acquisition and to great possessions. He was as unpractical as any Indian and set no price upon his labor of love. These are not the principles upon which the white man has founded his civilization. It is strange that he could rise to these simple principles which were so commonly observed among our people.”¹⁹

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¹⁸ Bercht, Brodsky, Farmer, and Taylor, eds., *TAINO Pre-Columbian Art*, page 79.

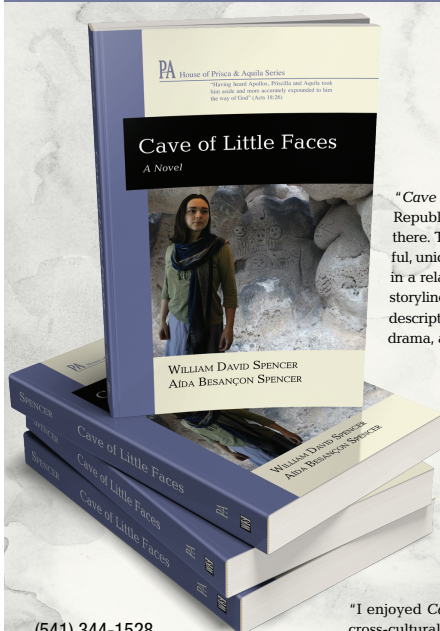
¹⁹ Eastman, *The Soul of an Indian*, pages 55-56.



Cave of Little Faces

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Shall the Daughters of Zelophehad Inherit? Allusions to Jubilee in Numbers 36:1-13

QUONEKUIA DAY

This article explores allusions in Numbers 36 to the law of Jubilee. How did the participants understand the law and its implications for the tribal inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters? In Numbers 36, the uncles of the daughters of Zelophehad challenge the newly amended law (Num 27:1-11), allowing women to inherit the land. They fear that the land would be transferred to another tribe if they marry outside of their tribe. The land movement would cause an unbalanced distribution of land that could not be corrected even in the year of Jubilee. Many scholars have raised questions concerning the uncles' appeal to the Jubilee law to challenge the women's inheritance. They argue that the law of Jubilee addresses only land that is sold or bought, not inherited. Based on the absence of the direct divine speech pattern in the initial amendment of the inheritance law (Num 27:6), some scholars have questioned whether the interpretation of the law of Jubilee in Numbers 36 represents Yahweh's view. Perhaps this is Moses's interpretation of the law in Numbers 36. Scholars have also questioned whether the mandate to marry in Numbers 36 nullifies the single women's freedom to inherit the land (Num 27:1-11). The purpose of this article is to present an overview of how the participants interpreted the law. By examining allusions to Jubilee in Numbers 36 and analyzing intertextual phrases attributed to Yahweh in Numbers 36 and 27, I seek to demonstrate that Yahweh, not Moses, amends each text of the inheritance law.

INTRODUCTION

In Numbers 36:1-13, the uncles of the daughters of Zelophehad present an appeal to amend the earlier adapted inheritance law, which allows unmarried daughters of a father with no sons to inherit their father's land (Num 27). The appeal is what to do if women who inherit land marry someone outside of their tribe and the land shifts to the possession of the woman's spouse. The uncles argue that even in the time of Jubilee, the land would remain with the other tribe. Moses responds to the uncle's appeal by the "mouth of the Lord" that the uncles are "right," and the women must marry within their tribe. The passage concludes with the women marrying within their tribe and an affirmation that this law was given to Moses from Yahweh on the plains of Moab near Jericho.

The request to amend the inheritance law has garnered scholarly attention because it includes Jubilee, which addresses land bought and sold, not inherited.¹ Martin Noth argues that the reference to Jubilee in vs. 4 is "an irrelevant addition" because the uncles have made their case in Numbers 36:3.² W. H. Bellinger contends the uncles anticipate the court will reference Jubilee in their decision—so the uncles describe why Jubilee cannot help in this ruling.³ Dennis Cole notes that the use of Jubilee refers to only inherited land; however, "this case sets a precedent for future litigation."⁴ David Aaron states that Jubilee is referenced to illustrate the "urgency" of the appeal.⁵ Philip Budd argues Numbers 36 is an amendment included "to sustain the inheritance laws of daughters without altering the allotted inheritance to each tribe."⁶ Katherine Sakenfeld states that the text emphasizes Jubilee and that the "intent of Jubilee needs to be safeguarded."⁷ In addition to the rationale for Jubilee in Numbers,

1 Walter Riggans, *Numbers*, Old Testament Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 245; David Stubbs, *Numbers*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 248; Raymond Brown, *The Message of Numbers: Journey to the Promised Land* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 304.

2 Martin Noth, *Numbers*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 257.

3 W.H. Bellinger Jr., *Leviticus and Numbers*, The New International Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 319.

4 Roy Gane, R. Dennis Cole, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2016), Kindle edition, ch. 36, "Female Inheritance and Marriage."

5 David H. Aaron, "The Ruse of the Daughters," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 80 (2009):1-38.

6 Philip Budd, *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 389.

7 Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, "Zelophehad's Daughters," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 15.4 (1988): 37-47.

scholars question whether the Israelites observed the event because it is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament.⁸ Scholars question, if it did happen, how could all the people be fed—even though Yahweh already says that he would increase the food to provide. Others speculate why the Day of Atonement and Jubilee occurs on the same day—is this a signal that corporate repentance precedes the blessings of Jubilee?⁹ There are questions on how to count the start of the Jubilee, and does one begin counting the next Jubilee on the same day of the previous Jubilee?¹⁰ Finally, there are always questions of authorship because of the structure of the book of Numbers.¹¹ These are important questions, but they need not all be answered in order for the reader to understand how the uncles applied the reference to Jubilee in their appeal.

This article examines allusions to Jubilee by comparing and contrasting the instructions of Jubilee in Leviticus 25 to Numbers 36. In addition, this article argues that the amending of the law comes from Yahweh through Moses and offers some comments on how the newly amended law provides the daughters of Zelophehad with more, rather than less, freedom. Before addressing the allusions to Jubilee, we will examine Jubilee as it is introduced in Leviticus 25.

JUBILEE

In Leviticus 25, Yahweh provides Moses with the following instructions for keeping the Jubilee.

1. On the tenth day of the seventh month in the fiftieth year, also the Day of Atonement, “the horn” (*šôpār*) sounds, signaling the beginning of Jubilee. The text reads: “And you will consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants. It will be a jubilee for you and each one of you will *return to his possession and each one of you will return to his family*”¹² (Lev 25:10.)

2. A command follows not to sow or plant but to eat from the ground (Lev 25:11-12).

3. The command repeats to *return to his possession* at the time of Jubilee (Lev 25:13).

4. The Israelites receive a command to deal justly with one another and to sell land back to its owner (Lev 25:14-17).

5. Blessings and provisions are stipulated for keeping Jubilee (Lev 25:18-22).

6. A declaration is added that the land is not bought or sold forever, but the people have a right “to redeem” the land (Lev 25: 23-25).

7. Instructions are provided for a poor person who gains resources to buy back land, *in order for him to return to his possession* or for it to be returned in the year of Jubilee so *he can return to his possession* (Lev 25:26-28).

8. The temporary right to redeem land in a walled city is described, but this property, if not redeemed, is exempt from a release during Jubilee (Lev 25:29-30).

9. Houses in unwallled villages must be released back to their owners in Jubilee (Lev 25:31).

10. Levites can redeem their land in Levitical cities at any time (Lev 25:32-33).

11. Slaves/hired workers are allowed *to return to the possession of their fathers* (Lev 25:40-41).

12. Instructions are provided on how to redeem a brother sold to a stranger, and, again in v. 54, if there is no means to redeem him, then, in Jubilee, he is released (Lev 25:47-55).

8 Michael Harbin, “Jubilee and Social Justice,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54.4 (2011): 685-99; John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66 Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian, 2005), 303.

9 Jonathan D. Safren, “Jubilee and the Day of Atonement,” *World Union of Jewish Studies* (1997): 107-113.

10 Calum Carmichael, “The Sabbatical/Jubilee Cycle and the Seven-Year Famine in Egypt,” *Biblica* 80.2 (1999): 224-39.

11 Gordon Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2008), 21.

12 Translations in this article are my own.

The account in Leviticus 25 includes six references (vv.10, 13, 27, 28, 29, and 41) for a person or group of people to “return each one to your possession” (*wəšāḇtem ’iš ’el-’āḥuzzāṭōw*).

The commands to return to their land precedes all other commands, including buying and selling the land, releasing the poor and hired/slave workers, and includes instructions on the Levites reclaiming their homes. It is important to realize that the Jubilee is not connected to something the Israelites do or earn; it is given to the children of Israel, so that at a specific time, all slaves are freed, debts forgiven, and people returned to their land. Jubilee is a gift from Yahweh to his people. The people do not even have to reap or sow, because Yahweh will provide the resources to sustain them during the celebration of the Jubilee.

ALLUSIONS TO JUBILEE

In Numbers 36:3-4, the heads of the households, introduced in vss. 1-2, present their case to Moses, the elders, and the heads of the tribes. The verses explain,

v.3 But if inheriting women **are married** to any of the **sons of the other tribes** of the people of Israel, then **their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of their fathers** and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So, it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance.¹³

v. 4 And when the Jubilee of the people of Israel comes, the women’s inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry, and, thus, their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers;

In Numbers 36:3-4, there are a series of losses that are emphasized. The first loss (highlighted in bold) is borne by the women,

v.3 But if inheriting women **are married** to any of the **sons of the other tribes** of the people of Israel, then **their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of their fathers** and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So, it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance.¹⁴

According to the change in the inheritance laws in Numbers 27, the daughters of Zelophehad have an inheritance. Now, when they marry someone within the tribe of their father, Zelophehad, the inheritance remains a part of the allotment to the tribe of their father, Zelophehad. However, once they marry outside of the tribe, the women no longer own their inheritance (it will go to their spouse’s family). Therefore, the women suffer the first loss.

The second loss of inheritance occurs to the uncles’ fathers, since their inheritance will be taken **from the inheritance of our fathers** and **added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry**. Thus, the land allotted to the uncles’ fathers reduces because the land has a new owner—the tribe into which the women marry.

The third loss of inheritance impacts the uncles:

v.3 But if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the people of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. **So, it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance.**

The uncles experience a loss because their fathers have lost access to the territory promised to the tribe of Manasseh. The fathers are likely the patriarchs listed in Numbers 26:4-63 as eligible to receive an inheritance.

13 The two Hebrew words וְנִתְּלָהֶן לְרֵגְלֵי make up a construct chain, so the translation can be “the lot of our inheritance.” A translation of “the previously allowed inheritance” removes the suffix translated as “our” from the noun “inheritance,” which I think is important.

14 Verse 3 here has to be translated the same as verse 3 above. Verse 3 makes use of an inclusio and repeats the word “take.”

Multiple scholars have noted that, at this point of the appeal, the uncles have made their case that women marrying outside of the tribe will impact the land allotted to them by Yahweh. Nevertheless, the uncles do not end their appeal, they introduce the matter of Jubilee in verse 4, but this time, instead of Jubilee leading to a plethora of blessings and a command to return home, it introduces a series of losses that are not changed.

In Numbers 36:4, two groups of people lose their access to the land: the women and their uncles. Moreover, when the Jubilee of the people of Israel comes, their [the women's] inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry, and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of our [the uncle's] fathers (v. 4). The tribe of Manasseh, is described in vs. 1 as "the tribe of our fathers."

When Jubilee arrives, there is no change and no land restoration; this is not what is supposed to happen on Jubilee, a day of a proclamation of release. The marriage of women outside of their tribe creates a potentially worse scenario for the tribe of Manasseh than if the women were denied a land inheritance. If Yahweh denied the women's request to own their deceased father's land, it only would impact the descendants of Zelophehad, not an entire tribe. However, marriage to someone from another tribe threatens the inheritance rights of an entire tribe—a loss that would remain even after the time of Jubilee. To experience loss during Jubilee is highly unusual. Other allusions to Jubilee in the Old Testament exhibit a return of one's land, a release from bondage, rescue from poverty. For example, in Isaiah 61. This passage is read by Jesus Christ at the beginning of his ministry.¹⁵ The text reads, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted and to proclaim liberty to the captives and for the prisoners, freedom, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the Day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn."

The prophet Isaiah declares that he has been anointed to "proclaim liberty to the captives" (vs.1) and "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (vs. 2). The proclamation of liberty and the year of the Lord's favor includes good news to the poor, emotional healing, freedom from prison, and comfort for the ones who grieve. The proclamation of Jubilee, as in Leviticus 25:10, comes from Yahweh; it is freely given to the people, and the people experience favor from Yahweh. In another example, Ezekiel 46:16-17 records:

"Thus says the Lord God, if the prince gives a gift to one of his sons of his inheritance, it will belong to his sons. It will be their possession by inheritance. But if he gives a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, and it will be his until the year of liberty, then it will return to the prince, but his inheritance (for) his sons it will belong to them."

In this passage, Yahweh instructs the prince that his land cannot be permanently removed from his family, but it must return to its rightful owner during the year of liberty. This passage recalls the mandate in Leviticus 25:23 that the land should not be sold forever but returned to the owner's tribe and the land belongs to Yahweh.

As introduced in Leviticus 25, Jubilee is a day when the people are called to come back to their land, and it is a time of celebration, release, and restoration. The reference to Jubilee in Numbers is not an intrusion as argued by some, neither is it irrelevant—it shows the direness of the uncles' appeal, that even the year of Jubilee cannot stop the loss that will incur with the women's family.

Another question concerning the request to amend the inheritance law concerns whether it is Moses or Yahweh who answers the uncles. Some scholars argue the resolution of the case originated with Moses, not Yahweh, because the passage lacks the direct divine speech pattern *wayyōmer*

15 Leonardo De Chirico, "The Biblical Jubilee," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 23.4 (1999): 47-60.

Yahweh 'el- mōšeh lēmōr (“and the Lord spoke to Moses saying”) that occurs in the first amendment of the law in Numbers 27:6 and instead uses *'al- pî Yahweh lēmōr* (“According to the mouth of the Lord”), saying, as Sakenfeld states, “...Moses proceeds directly to the announcement of God’s decision, without consultation with the Deity. Thus, the narrator here reports Moses’ speech to the Israelites, rather than God’s speech of command to Moses, as is recorded in chapter 27.”¹⁶ Sakenfeld correctly recognizes that there is no direct divine speech pattern in Numbers 36:2; however, other areas in the text support the argument that Moses’ instructions were directly from Yahweh. First, the passage includes six verses when the participant or narrator declares that the events are as Yahweh commanded:

1. The uncles declare twice that the initial amending of the law occurs because “the Lord commanded” (*šiwwāh Yahweh*) (Num 36:2).
2. Moses answers “by the mouth of the Lord” (*'al- pî Yahweh lēmōr*) (Num 36:5).
3. Numbers 36:6 records that “the Lord commanded” (*šiwwāh Yahweh*) the women to marry.
4. The daughters of Zelophehad did as “the Lord commanded” (*šiwwāh Yahweh*) (Num 36:10).
5. The final verse, Numbers 36:13, reports that these commandments were those which “the Lord commanded” (*šiwwāh Yahweh*).

Second, there are at least twenty instances in the book of Numbers (Num 3:16, 39, 51; 4:37, 41, 45, 49; 9:18, 20, 23; 10:13; 13:3; 14:41; 22:18; 24:13; 33:2, 38; 36:5; 9:23 and 34:5) where the phrase “by the mouth of the Lord” (*'al- pî Yahweh lēmōr*) communicates Yahweh’s commands or instructions. However, this is not all of Sakenfeld’s concern as she questions why there is no record of Yahweh telling Moses what to say (as he did with the daughters of Zelophehad case in Num 27:5-7) before Moses declares the response. Again, this does not mean that Moses has not heard from Yahweh. Let us consider the following two cases: the Korahite rebellion in Numbers 16 and the Israelite rebellion in Exodus 32.

In Numbers 16, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebel against Moses and cause confusion and rebellion in the Israelites camp. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram are dissatisfied with their role and jealous of Moses because Yahweh has chosen him to lead Israel. In Numbers 16:21, Yahweh tells Moses, “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” However, the text does not reveal what Yahweh will do. In other words, the text does not tell the reader the method Yahweh will use to “consume the people in a moment.” In Numbers 16:28-30, Moses tells the Israelites: “And Moses said by this you will know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these works, for (they are) not from my mind. If these men die like all men die, or if they are visited like all men are visited, (then) Yahweh has not sent me. But if Yahweh creates a new thing, and the ground opens her mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down to Sheol alive, then you will know that these men have provoked the Lord.”

Yahweh is not chronicled as telling Moses, “I will open the earth and swallow up the households of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.” Yet, this must be the method with which Yahweh has chosen to “consume them in a moment.” This is the first reference to “consume in a moment,” the second one occurs in vs. 45 when Yahweh unleashes a plague against the people who continue to rebel against Moses.

In another case, in Exodus 32, Moses is on Mt. Sinai with Yahweh while the people led by Aaron create a golden calf and worship it as their god.¹⁷ Yahweh tells Moses to go down the moun-

16 Katherine D. Sakenfeld, “Numbers,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., eds. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, Jacqueline E. Lapsely (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012): 79-87.

17 Scholars are uncertain if the Israelites understood the reference to Yahweh as Yahweh revealed to Moses or as representative of the Egyptian gods. John Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), 421; Thomas Dozeman, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 704; Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 2005), 359.

tain because the people have corrupted themselves. Moses, upon seeing the people, throws down the tablets of the law and rebukes the people and Aaron for their transgression against Yahweh. Then Moses pronounces judgment upon the people. Exodus 32:27-29 reads, “And he said to them, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Let each man strap a sword to his side and pass through and return through the camp, from one entrance to the other entrance, each man kill his brother, and his friend, and his neighbor.’ And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses and that day about three thousand of the people fell. Then Moses said, ‘Dedicate yourselves today to the Lord, for every man has been against his son and his brother, that he (the Lord) may give you a blessing this day.’”

Moses uses the direct divine speech pattern “thus says the Lord” (*kōh-’ā-mar Yahweh*), but nowhere in the text is an account of Yahweh telling Moses to have each man put on his sword, move through the camp, and kill his brother.

In the two examples, Yahweh does not reveal the details of the punishment, yet Moses knows what to do. There is no direct divine speech pattern in Numbers 16, but in Exodus 32 there is—yet, in both cases, the text does not record a conversation between Yahweh and Moses about the intended punishment. Therefore, one can argue that the absence of a direct divine speech pattern in Numbers 36 does not mean that Moses rendered a decision independent of or against the will of Yahweh.

Finally, many scholars have noted that the marriage requirement nullifies the blessing because the woman’s inheritance goes to her spouse, and the woman’s condition is worsened or more restricted.¹⁸ A few things to consider concerning this argument: it was preferable to be married rather than a single woman in ancient Israel. Marriage provided security and the possibility of children (even the promised Messiah). The likelihood is that women would marry, although marriage is never a requirement to inherit the land in Numbers 27. This article proposes that the women’s condition has improved because she has a choice in the selection of her spouse. In Numbers 36:6, the amended law includes a command from Yahweh that such women may marry who is “good/right” in their eyes” (*laṭṭōwḅ bā’ênêhem*). In a patriarchal society, Yahweh invites the women to participate in the selection of their spouses. It is not clear how this occurs—and for many scholars, this seems to be why so little attention is given to the permission to marry who is “right in their eyes.” In other words, some think the Israelites would not allow it, so it never happened. Perhaps it did not happen, but that does not mean that it was not a command. The command still stands even if the people refuse to adhere to the command. The allowance to marry who is “good/right” in their eyes” (*laṭṭōwḅ bā’ênêhem*) also provides additional protection from men who suddenly find the women desirable because of their inheritance.

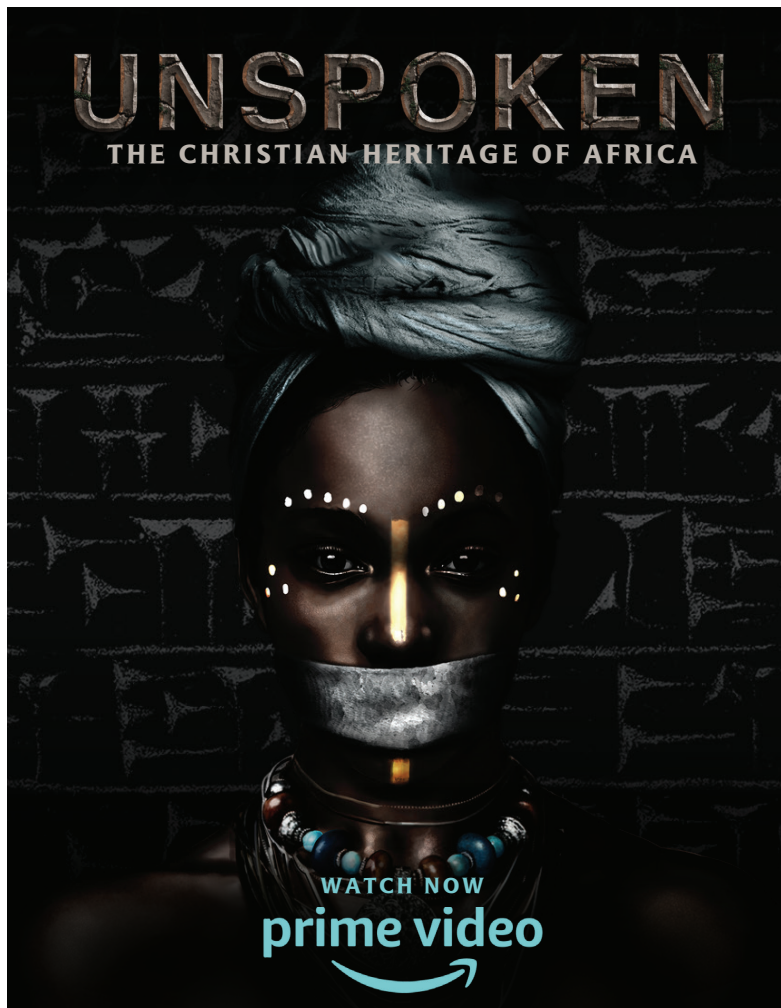
Another issue to consider is the use of this phrase “good/right in their eyes” in Numbers 36, in comparison to the use of the exact phrase in the book of Judges. In the book of Judges, the Israelites’ sins become increasingly worse, growing from idolatry to eventual rape and kidnapping. In Judges 17:6 and 21:25, this phrase (*laṭṭōwḅ bā’ênêhem*) is used as a closing judgment against the Israelite nation. The book of Judges reveals what happens when people do what is right “in their own eyes.” In contrast, in Numbers 36:6, Yahweh allows the daughters of Zelophehad to select their spouse. The women have power in that they were allowed to possess the land (Num 27), and although the land will transfer to their spouse—it is to shift to a spouse who is “right in their eyes.”

In conclusion, this paper has attempted to show that the inclusion of Jubilee is not an intrusion or out of place; instead, it reinforces that Jubilee, as intended by Yahweh, cannot occur, at least for the tribe of Manasseh, unless the law changes. Jubilee requires the people to return to their land, and anything that hinders the return, such as slavery, financial ruin, or another person using their

18 Juliana Claassens, “Give us a portion among our father’s brothers: The Daughters of Zelophehad, Land, and the Quest for Human Dignity,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 37 (2013): 319-36.

land, has to end so the people can return to their land and celebrate the year of Jubilee. If the law does not change, at least one tribe will experience a loss during Jubilee. In addition, the requirement to marry is not nearly as restrictive as some would suppose, for, in this case, these women have an opportunity to participate in the arrangement of their marriage.¹⁹ At the end of the narrative, the conflict has been resolved—the land that Yahweh intends to give the children of Israel will not leave their possession because the women will marry within their tribe.

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¹⁹ This may parallel the widow or divorcee who is allowed to make her own vow in Num 30:9. Thank you to Gary Edward Schnittjer for the “vow” observation during my presentation at the Evangelical Theological Society Nov. 2021.



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THREE IN ONE WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Analogies for the Trinity

Do our images of “one God in three persons” reflect God well?

Throughout history, Christians have pictured the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through analogies. Such illustrations—some from the West but also from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and more—come freighted with theological ramifications that the church has rejected (heresies) or embraced (doctrines). In *Three in One*, William David Spencer shares a lifetime of insights from teaching within the global church, bringing fresh images and analogies of the Trinity to deepen our theological vocabulary.

Drawing from his extensive teaching in geographically and culturally diverse contexts and his artist’s passion for evocative words and visuals, Spencer offers readers a rich, many-faceted, and practical exploration of the Trinity. Alongside historical and contemporary theology and biblical studies, he considers the strengths and shortcomings of various analogies used to explain the Trinity, such as these:

- Light
- Water
- The Celtic knot
- The totem pole
- Musical harmonies
- The human body
- The family

Readers of *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* will gain a personal understanding of the Trinity as well as tools for teaching about the Trinity in adult and children’s ministry contexts.

William David Spencer (ThD, Boston University School of Theology) is distinguished adjunct professor of theology and the arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Boston campus (Center for Urban Ministerial Education). He has authored, coauthored, or coedited eighteen books, including *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* and *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Serving Together in the Church*, as well as hundreds of publications in journals and periodicals. He has served in urban ministry for fifty-five years.

Is Using Images for the Holy Trinity ‘Unholy’ Theology?¹

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Since 1992, by way of introducing the doctrine of God and the varieties of views on the Trinity that have emerged throughout doctrinal history, I have been starting off the Trinity sessions of my first systematic theology course each year asking students what images and illustrations they use when they teach in their churches or in their homes. Each time a student would introduce an illustration new to me, I would note it down. As can be imagined, a lot of repetition followed, but images new to me, some of these acquired in their churches or invented by these creative students, themselves, would join the list. The point of this lively exercise was to start with an engaging class discussion before I backed up my dump truck of knowledge and let all the wisdom in my lectures slide onto this captive audience.

Several years ago, when I first sensed God was leading me to write *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity*, a textbook for my, and hopefully others’, classes, I became more intentional on taking a sounding of my students’ views and, as a result, made up a simple four-question survey, asking:

- 1) What illustrations or images do you tend to use when describing the Trinity?
- 2) Does this differ if you are talking to a child or an adult or to someone well-schooled in the faith like a seminarian or pastor? If you use different illustrations, what do you prefer in each case?
- 3) Do you prefer images that move or change (e.g., are fluid), have parts (are static), or – what?
- 4) What do you like to emphasize about God’s nature in your illustrations? What limitations do your images have?

At the bottom of the one-page survey handout, I wrote in small type, “I’m trying to see if different people groups emphasize different aspects of the Trinity. Please tell me your ethnic background: _____. Thank you so much for answering my survey! Prof. Bill Spencer.”

That was it. Very simple and straightforward, no place to sign a name so I could assure them the survey would be anonymous, the ethnic group question being the only way for me to distinguish any patterns. I omitted age and gender. My point was simple. I wanted their first response (operating on the old adage that 80% of the time the first thing we blurt out is our true opinion and often the correct answer on multiple-guess tests). I was only trying to sample what was reflected in the various churches, since my students are mainly multicultural English Language Learning adults and many are already pastoring or helping pastor ethnic churches when they arrive at Gordon-Conwell’s Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME),² where I have been teaching theology since 1992.

You can imagine my surprise, then, when recently one of my Brazilian students handed back

1 This article is an adaption of a paper presented Nov. 16, 2022 to the Other Voices of Interpretation study group of the international Evangelical Theological Society meeting in Denver, CO.

2 Michael Mora has a skillfully drawn list of “10 Key Things to Consider When Designing Surveys.” This went up on *Surveygizmo* on May 11, 2016 at <https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/designing-surveys/>, after my survey was underway. But as I stack my little survey up against his wisdom, I think God graciously led me so that I stumbled into the heart of the secret: go simple. Expert Mora recommended one avoid technical words, make the progression logical, mix quantitative (the how many) with the qualitative (the what are they and are they effective? as I read these), use clear question structure, simple survey design. I think I may have erred by not avoiding asking two questions at once, but I was definitely expecting “bias in self reporting,” in fact, I was hoping to “capture” “the state of mind,” so I think asking the questions before they were confronted with the professor’s opinion was the way to go. The final bit of advice on *Surveygizmo* was to base the survey on “your research objective.” Well, I wanted to know their opinions, and, as you can see in this section, they were often pretty blunt about those, bless their hearts!

the survey with one line scrawled on it: “I don’t use one. It’s a mystery.” Shortly afterwards, a Nova Scotian student (in my wife’s class at Acadia Divinity School, where I was simply helping out, but whose gracious students agreed to answer my survey) expanded the reason for rejecting images: “A number of people will use various illustrations. However, to my knowledge, they all lead to heresy if they are pushed at all. If you find one helpful that is fine. Do not rest your faith on it or think that it accurately pictures the Trinity.” This student, who signed his name, was serving as a denominational representative.

Back in Boston, a “Caucasian” student who picked “water as solid, liquid & gas” as the preference, did not extend that image to children, deciding to protect them against imagery, explaining: “I probably wouldn’t use an illustration for a child – just describe the 3 Persons living together as one, leaving the mystery in place.”

A Chinese student wrote, “I seldom use those images. I know someone uses water, ice and steam. Some use different parts of a tree. But I had a hard time us[ing] them and I am not comfortable using them.”

For many of my students, with no special emphasis on ethnicity, increasingly, the theme of avoiding heresy dominates as the reason for discarding the use of images in describing the Trinity, as one “Caucasian” student announced: “I’ve started avoiding metaphors since all too easily they fall into heresy.” And, yet, this student confessed, “I sometimes draw a triangle and write the names of the person of God,” but assured me in a parenthesis, “I used to most often use the clover, but stopped.” As for talking to a new believer or child: “I wouldn’t use an image/metaphor if talking to someone well schooled. I’d be more tempted to use one with someone new to the idea or a child.” But, immediately, the answer to the preference for kinetic or static images was qualified: “Again I try to avoid images – but probably static,” and added, a closing caution: “All the illustrations break down and trivialize the paradox!” Back and forth, back and forth, this student went, but settled for including a clear rejection of the use of images or illustrations in the answers to all four of the survey questions.

Some students struggled, as did this one, but other students did not struggle, just writing “no” at the top of the survey page or handing back the survey blank without answers of any kind.

By 2021, when I completed the research, I was seeing at least one third of my class avoiding images, and, weighing in how many did not return the survey, I realize we may be up to half the class rejecting the use of illustrations for the Trinity.

These students are not surly. Not at all. They are affable, conscientious, caring Christian leaders who hand in class evaluations, and self-evaluations (answering honestly and often evaluating their work more severely than I do). They have heart-felt opinions and deep convictions. Mature, they often work two jobs, rear families, pour themselves out for others, and are dedicated to and endlessly active in their churches. They are cordial with each other, very appreciative of me, hand in to the school glowing evaluations of the course, and constantly email me with questions and observations, sometimes sending me data they think I might find interesting on topics we are covering. Many have continued to keep in contact with me over the decades.

But on answering questions on the use of illustrations for the Trinity, I am running into a shutdown.

So, how was I to understand this unusual neglect for what seemed to me an essential question: how do they teach or preach the Trinity to the people whom God has entrusted to their care?

At first, the blank surveys made me wonder, were they not being taught about the Trinity in their churches? That was impossible. I even toyed with the idea of not handing out the survey right at the beginning of the Trinity sessions, but holding it until the end and then distributing it. But I abandoned that idea, realizing such conscientious students might feel obligated to repeat back from

my lectures what they thought Professor wanted to hear and that would be the opposite of what I was attempting to discover. I also decided not to ask point blank why so many were not submitting answers. Knowing these multicultural students, I realized they might feel shamed and invent imagery preferences on the spot just to please me and that would simply nobble the results. What I wanted to learn is what they initially brought to class: what they had been taught and what they were themselves teaching.

Similarly, I had begun to notice that such hesitations and objections were spreading into Academia.

When some inventive theologian does introduce imagery, as the highly creative Roderick Leupp does in his refreshing IVP book *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology: Themes, Patterns and Explorations*, the reception may be a frosty one. Contextualizing his book in the popular culture of 2008, he wrote: “Trinitarian metaphors and remembrances can be multiplied almost without end, to the point of edification for some and distraction for others. Some of these are by now virtually enshrined in catechetical instruction: the Trinity ‘proven’ by water existing in the three conditions of liquid, solid and gas; an egg’s shell, white and yolk bestowing a breakfast homily. It takes no great theological imagination to see oneness flowering into threeness and triplicity converging to unity here, there and everywhere. Would these trinitarian images be convincing or, if not that, at least inviting?” And he presents a number of new images like three trunks growing together to form one tree; two men walking as one and huddled under a single umbrella; fork, spoon, knife – all dedicated to the singular quest for food; three young girls, arms linked, falling over backward in one motion, and others.

To these suggestions, the brilliant Indian scholar Peter Phan responded: “Trinitarian theology has arguably, depending on where one stands, benefited or suffered the most from the use of metaphysics and analogies. To begin with analogies, they range from homespun images of the triangle or the shamrock or father, mother, and child to the so-called psychological models devised by Augustine or Dorothy L. Sayers to contemporary scientific models (e.g., particle, wave, and field). Currently there is an excess of creativity in devising analogies for the Trinity, from the so-called *vestigia Trinitatis*³ so that any triad, however artificial and accidental, is harnessed for an illustration of the Trinity.”⁴

Dr. Phan asks “whether there are criteria by which to judge the legitimacy and value of the analogies used for God.” And he poses a series of insightful questions: “Are analogies derived from humans as *imago Dei* preferable to those taken from the material world? If so, what are the criteria to judge their usefulness and where are they to be found? Are they to be exclusively based on the Bible or to be determined philosophically?” He follows with an interesting discussion of the appropriateness and legitimacy of various philosophical and methodological approaches to the Trinity, but, before he launches into that, he centers in on Roderick Leupp’s book in what appears to me to be a drive-by fired footnote: “For an excess of creativity in discerning the *vestigia Trinitatis*, see Leupp, *The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, 8-10, 173-78.”⁵

IS THE USE OF ANALOGIES TO DESCRIBE GOD AN UNHOLY ACTIVITY?

One Sunday, I mentioned these hesitations to one of my fellow pastors at Pilgrim Church in Beverly, Massachusetts,⁶ and he shared with me his own concern. He felt that analogies don’t tell us anything deeply profound about the Trinity because they are balancing two referents with

3 Latin plural of *vestigium*, “footstep, step; footprint, track; trace, vestige; moment, instant,” John C. Traupman, *The New College Latin & English Dictionary* (NY: Bantam, 1966), 330, metaphorically, in this case, depicting “footprints” of the Trinity.

4 Peter C. Phan, “Systematic issues in trinitarian theology,” in Peter C. Phan, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (Cambridge, GB: Cambridge University, 2011), 13-14.

5 Phan, “Systematic issues in trinitarian theology,” 26.

6 Rev. Dr. Robert Samsel.

often only a single connection between them. So, one sees the connection, but doesn't really learn anything deeper about either referent that is being compared. The connection's information, while interesting, he sees as shallow.

By reduction, then, analogies distort, and in theology distortion means heterodoxy.

All of this raises the question with which I entitled this article: "Is Using Images for the Holy Trinity 'Unholy' Theology?"

Why "unholy?" As God unpacks the 10 Commandments in the Pentateuch, God warns the people in Leviticus 19:2 to be holy (*qadash*, "apartness, sacredness"⁷) as God is holy. The first charge we see in Exodus 20:3 is to the people to place no pagan god before the true God. In Leviticus 19:3, this is the third precept after respecting parents and keeping the Sabbath.⁸ In Leviticus 20:2, the first capital crime listed is to sacrifice a child to the pagan god Molech. In Deuteronomy 4:15-19, God reminds the people not to represent or recast God in any form human or otherwise and worship that. Idolatry locates God in or through these created forms. This would not be setting either God or those who worship God apart from pagan worship. Would the making of an analogy for God with something created appear to duplicate idolatry and, thereby, be unholy? Such a challenge has been in play since these commands were given eons ago, so why this sudden application to metaphorical language?

Some of this mystery began to disappear when various students, academic colleagues, and my co-pastor all kept pointing me to the Lutheran Satire "St. Patrick's Bad Analogies," a hilariously entertaining, extremely clear, polemically provocative, compellingly creative, thoroughly caustic, and quite iconoclastic cartoon, that illustrates this point: "The problem with using analogies to explain the Holy Trinity is that you always end up confessing some ancient heresy."⁹

How effective is this three minute and forty-nine second attack on illustrative language, condemning its use as a gateway to heresy?¹⁰ By April 7, 2022, "St. Patrick's Bad Analogies" could boast 1 million, 677, 377 views, since its posting on March 14, 2013, and currently the YouTube site appears to have ceased counting at "1.7M views 9 years ago," when I accessed it on January 14, 2023.¹¹ Ballooning in views, when it was linked by *Pinterest*,¹² it has been picked up and posted by so many churches of both Calvinist and Arminian persuasions, parachurch ministries, and individuals that its influence is mind-boggling. The impact of this cartoon has spread like a spilled can of paint. It has inundated the web.

Now, Dr. Phan's caution against "an excess of creativity" and questions concerning who is responsible for judging the appropriateness of specific analogic language is more than due, since this Lutheran Satire has seized the attention of so many of the Christian faith across the denominations. For evangelicals, however, the biblical judgement should take precedence. So, let's examine how exactly "St. Patrick's Bad Analogies" works its logic as a biblical argument.

In this video, two cartoon characters, self-identified as illiterate fifth century Irish peasants,¹³ ask St. Patrick to explain the Trinity. St. Patrick, as an icon, replies with discursive, declarative

7 (William Gesenius,) Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (BDB) (NY: Oxford University Press, 1968), 871.

8 If we tie these commandments together, responsible parents pass on God's laws, and the Sabbath is when God is worshiped by all God's people.

9 <https://lutheransatire.org/media/st-patricks-bad-analogies>.

10 Since its runaway success, it has spawned a musical version, and a number of other creative cartoon videos challenging anti-Christian and heretical positions from Richard Dawkins's atheism to the Mormons tritheism, to The Jehovah's Witnesses' Unitarianism. "Saint Patrick: The Musical" (posted March 17, 2019), already boasts 153, 856 hits, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHr02U1OYVv&t=224s>, posted March 17, 2019, as of this writing.

11 St. Patrick's Bad Analogies, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQLfgaUoQCw>, accessed January 14, 2023.

12 <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/238901955206032586/>.

13 As they self-identify in a later cartoon, "Donall and Conall Learn That Jesus Isn't Divine," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXDt8WHSPH>.

language: “There are three Persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yet there is only one God.” When they claim not to understand, the spokesperson, Donall, asks for an analogy. When St. Patrick accommodates by summoning up the water image, how it can be found in three forms, “liquid, ice, and vapor,” these illiterate peasants turn erudite and reject that illustration as modalism. St. Patrick then turns to the analogy of the sun: “the star and the light, and the heat.” This they dismiss as Arianism, claiming the light and heat are creations and therefore not God. St. Patrick’s third attempt, the three-leaf clover, is dismissed as “partialism,” a God in three thirds being suggested. The fourth analogy, “how the same man can be a husband and a father and an employer” is repudiated as modalistic, and the fifth, “the three layers of an apple,” as “partialism,” again, at which St. Patrick gives up and just quotes the Athanasian Creed. This is finally acceptable. No figurative analogies, simply declarative statements somewhat similar to St. Patrick’s opening attempt. The difference apparently is that this final statement is from an historically orthodox creed.

APPLYING THE RULE OF REASON TO THE CALL TO DISCARD ALL IMAGERY IN DISCUSSING THE TRINITY

Now, what do we make of this approach? Well, first of all, we need a bit of a reality check about its dismissal of all analogies as triggers of heresy.

St. Patrick didn’t make up the analogy of the star sun in our sky and its radiance as depicting the relationship between the Father and the Son. The writer of Hebrews was inspired to reveal that, building on such Old Testament precedents as Psalm 84:12 in the Masoretic text (84:11 in English translations, such as the New International Version [NIV]), “Because a sun (*shemesh*) and shield is the Lord,” or Habbakuk 3:4, where God’s brightness shines like light, emitting rays (*qeren*) from God’s hand (or side, or strength, or power, *yad*), or the prophetic promise of Malachi 3:20 in the Masoretic text (4:2 in the NIV) of the “sun of righteousness” rising with healing.” All of this language is metaphorical.

Hebrews, like the Gospel of Matthew, is one of the New Testament’s strongest bridges to the Old Testament. Many speculate, but no scholar knows for certain who wrote this early,¹⁴ elegant book.¹⁵ But from the outset the writer of Hebrews in 1:3 speaks of the Son of God as “being the radiance (*apaulyasma*) of the glory and representation (*charaktēr*, a term used for the “stamp,” as on coins, or for a “distinctive mark...by which [something] is known from others,” or “the features of the face” in classical Greek.¹⁶ Hebrews’ use represents God’s “substantial nature or essence

14 International Critical Commentary (I.C.C.) commentator James Moffatt admired it as “a little masterpiece of religious thought.” See James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T.&T. Clark, 1924), xiii. He notes that its first undisputed appearance by an early church writer is in *The Letter of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, Commonly Called Clement’s First Letter*. Cyril Richardson has noted the instances of Clement citing Hebrews in his translation of *First Clement* in the collection of early writings he edited *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Collier, 1970), see notes on 52, 60, 63, in addition to other possible allusions.

15 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. et al., *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005) notes in the introduction to Hebrews a number of candidates that have been put forward as author for Hebrews: “Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Apollos, Epaphras, Silas, Priscilla and others.” I was taught the Apostle Paul was the most probable author when I was growing up. John Calvin, however, sees Hebrews 2:1-4 as ruling Paul out, “This passage indicates that this epistle was not written by Paul,” because “it was not Paul who wrote that he had the Gospel by hearing and not by revelation” (See the obviously misnamed “Commentaries on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews,” 2.3 [2315] in *Calvin’s Commentaries: Ephesians – Jude*, vol. 12 [Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers and Authors, n.d.]. Calvin’s conclusion is supported by Acts 9:5; 26:15; Gal. 1:16, where Paul reports he saw Christ when, out of the shekinah glory, he was called on the Damascus road. To me, one of the most serious objections against Paul’s authorship may be that Paul was probably dead when the author first began to circulate this book. I would also add as a possible candidate Phoebe, whom Paul honors in Romans 16 and to whom Paul entrusted the delivery of his letter to the Romans and, therefore, its initial interpretation. Since both Prisca and Phoebe were learned women, if either wrote it, she may have remained anonymous, given the cultural prejudices of the times.

16 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, comps. Henry Stuart Jones, rev. *A Greek-English Lexicon* (hereafter LSJ), 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 1977, col. 1. Also see LSJ, 1895, col. 1.

(*hupostasis*) come to earth.”¹⁷ This is an image: God the Father is like the sun in the sky. Jesus, as God-Among-Us, is like the radiance of the sun, entering our midst, giving us life and new life, illuminating us with God’s knowledge, lighting the right path so our feet will not stumble.

Liddell and Scott’s classical Greek lexicon tells us that, in ancient Greek, *apaulyasma* – and this is its lone use in the New Testament¹⁸ – meant “radiance, effulgence, of light beaming from a luminous body.”¹⁹ BDAG defines it in the active as “radiance, effulgence in the sense of brightness from a source,” but also, in the passive, as “reflection, i.e. brightness shining back.”²⁰ So the writer of Hebrews pictures Jesus glowing with God’s *Shekinah* glory, a radiance shining with the brightness of the Godhead, the Source from whence Jesus Christ came.

The Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt from c. 30 B.C. to A.D. 45,²¹ employs the same Greek word (*apaulyasma*) to “the relation of the Logos to God.”²² However, for Philo, the light of God’s “word” would be more in the category of “reflection” than “radiance.” A reflection simply mirrors something, but radiance shares its substance. This distinction Philo indicates in his *Allegorical Interpretations*, Book 3²³: “And the word of God (*ho logos de tou theou*) is above all the world, and the oldest and the principal²⁴ of those which were created.”²⁵ For Philo, the word is clearly understood as a creation, and not a Person of the triune Godhead. As many ancient Jews, Philo may not have been expecting God’s messiah to be revealed as the divine Word incarnated in our world, as the Apostle John notes: “Among his own he came, and his own did not receive him” (John 1:11).

The illustration is appropriate. How salutary and nourishing to our spirits is God’s light in us, as the vitamin D of the sun is nourishing to our bodies. No wonder this image became so popular in the early church.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE MISUSE OF THE ANALOGY OF THE SUN AND ITS RADIANCE

But how this simple illustration was understood by Arius versus Athanasius proved to be very different and very revealing in its difference.

Arius in his theological poem, *Thalia*, announces, “Foreign from the Son in substance is the Father.” So, he concludes of the Son, “Hence He is conceived in numberless conceptions. Spirit,

17 Walter Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (hereafter BDAG) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1040, col. 2.

18 “575. *apaulyasma* (1),” ed. James A. Swanson, John R. Kholenberger III, Edward W. Goodrick, *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 90, col. 2.

19 See “*apaugazō*,” LSJ, 181, col. 2.

20 BDAG, 99, col.1.

21 Piero Treves, “Philon,” in N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (OCD) (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1970), 822-23. See “c. 20 B.C.-c. A.D. 50” as an alternative set of dates for Philo’s life in “Philo,” Frank L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1083, col. 2.

22 Philo. *Allegorical Interpretations of Genesis II, III*. In *Philo*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library, translated by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), Book 3, para. 61 (173–76). Worthy of note is that Philo is noted for his great courage in representing the Jewish community on a delegation to Rome in A.D. 39-40, pleading for “exemption from the duty of worshipping the Emperor” to the notorious Gaius. This was no small feat. Among the atrocities Gaius had planned but could not accomplish was to set up his own statue in the Jews’ Jerusalem temple. See details of Gaius’s brief and lethal life in John Percy Vyvian Dacre Baisdon, “Gaius,” OCD, 452-53. Thus, for Philo to lead a mission to this crazed autocrat at the height of his rampages to intercede for a population under his power not to worship him was a perilous mission, fraught with lethal danger. When Philo was not protecting the Jewish community, he was doing philosophy. Apropos to his mission, when Philo employs the same Greek word (*apaulyasma*) to “the relation of the Logos to God,” he is careful to omit a self-styled “god” like Caligula, where no light of grace existed.

23 Philo. *Allegorical Interpretations of Genesis II, III*, Book 3, para. 61 (173–76).

24 From *genikos*, or “typical” = type, LSJ, 344, col. 1.

25 *Gegone*, “*gegona*” from *ginomai*, BDAG, 190, col. 2, “To come into being through process or birth...to come into existence, be made be created, be manufactured,” BDAG, 197, col. 1.

Power, Wisdom, God's glory, Truth, Image, and Word. Understand that He is conceived to be Radiance and Light."

So, here our cartoon theologians would be accurate in rejecting Arius's interpretation of the image, since, in Arius's reading, the Son does not share God's substance, and, therefore, since God is an absolute, what does not share God's being must be a creation. However, the rejection of this interpretation as heretical has to do with discarding Arius's theological reading of the image and not a blanket condemnation of the biblical image itself.

ATHANASIUS'S USE OF THE ANALOGY OF THE SUN AND ITS RADIANCE

Instead, for Athanasius, the analogy of the sun and its radiance illustrated a key part of his argument for the Son of God sharing substance with the Father and Athanasius employed it all throughout his critique of the Arian and Semi-Arian councils and their creeds. For example, in his *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*,²⁶ Athanasius writes: "The illustration of the Light and Radiance has this meaning. For the Saints have not said that the Word was related to God as fire kindled from the heat of the sun, which is commonly put out again, for this is an external work and a creature of its author, but they all preach of Him as Radiance, thereby to signify His being from the substance, proper and indivisible, and His oneness with the Father. This also will secure His true unalterableness and immutability; for how can these be His, unless He be proper Offspring of the Father's substance? for this too must be taken to confirm His identity with His own Father."²⁷

In fact, Athanasius demands, "Who will presume to say that the radiance is unlike and foreign from the sun? rather who, thus considering the radiance relatively to the sun, and the identity of the light, would not say with confidence, 'Truly the light and the radiance are one, and the one is manifested in the other, and the radiance is in the sun, so that whoso sees this sees that also?'" And, again, "Such a oneness and natural possession, what should it be named by those who believe and see aright, but Offspring one in substance? And God's Offspring."²⁸ So, he chides the Arians and semi-Arians, if they "understood Him to be the proper offspring of the Father's substance, as the radiance is from light, they would not every one of them have found fault with the [Nicæan] Fathers; but would have been confident that the Council [of Nicæa, AD 325] wrote suitably; and that this is the orthodox faith, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ."²⁹ Therefore, "They have called the Father the Fount of Wisdom and Light, and the Offspring from the Fountain, as He says, *I am the Life*, and *I Wisdom dwell with Prudence*.³⁰ But the Radiance from the Light, and

26 Please note that John Henry Cardinal Newman, whose classic rendition of these two great works of Athanasius I am using, employs the British spellings throughout. I am quoting from his stellar translations. The switching back and forth between capitals and small letters, for example for "radiance" and "sun," are also his, as are the lack of capitals for some sentences, as he tries to capture Athanasius's own particular style of writing.

27 Interesting to note is that Athenagoras calls the Holy Spirit "an effulgence as light from fire" and "an outflow from God, flowing out and returning like a ray of the sun," but, far from these images teaching subordination of the Holy Spirit, translator and annotator Joseph Hugh Crehan reports: "The term *aporroia*, or outflow, is applied to the Spirit in *Emb.* 10 and 24. This cannot imply subordination of the Spirit to the other two Persons, for the three are joined several times (*Emb.* 10, 12, and 24) in expressions where no distinction of rank between the three is made. 'That two Divine Persons and an impersonal emanation should be thus enumerated together, by so philosophic a writer as Athenagoras, is not conceivable.' This verdict by H.L. Mansel (DCB [*Dictionary of Christian Biography*] 1.206) must surely be accepted." Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians; The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. Joseph Hugh Crehan, S.J. (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1956), ¶24 (p. 61); ¶10 (p. 40); Note 35 (p. 121).

28 Athanasius, *Defence of Nicene Definition*, 5.11 ¶24 (40-41).

29 Athanasius, *De Snyodis*. 3.9 ¶40 (137).

30 In his defense of the Council of Nicæa's definition, when Athanasius uses the Proverbs 8 image of Wisdom for Jesus Christ, he is illustrating the incarnation, as he specifies in 3.12 ¶14: "whereas He is Son of God, He became Son of man also...He took on Himself a body from the Virgin Mary...He took a body and said, *The Lord has created Me a beginning of His ways unto His works*. For as it properly belongs to God's Son to be everlasting, and in the Father's bosom, so on his becoming man, the words befitted Him, *The Lord created Me*. For then it is said of Him, and He hungered and He thirsted, and He asked where Lazarus lay, and He suffered, and He rose again. And as, when we hear of Him as Lord and God and true Light, we understand Him as being from the Father, so on hearing, *The Lord created*, and *Servant*, and *He suffered*, we shall justly ascribe this, not to the Godhead, for it is irrelevant, but we must interpret it by that flesh which He

Offspring from Fountain, and Son from Father, how can these be so suitably expressed as by ‘One in substance?’” So, he points out in the *De Synodis*, which is his critique of his opponents’ councils, that the Son is “genuine from the Father, as Life from Fountain, and Radiance from Light. Else why should we understand ‘offspring’ and ‘son,’ in no corporeal way, while we conceive of ‘one in substance?’”³¹ These are but a few examples of how he interprets and employs this radiance/sun image over and over.

Thus, in these ways, the illustration supports Athanasius’s charge: “Speak not of two Gods but of one God; there being but one Face of Godhead, as the Light is one and the Radiance...the sun and radiance are two, but the light one, because the radiance is an offspring from the Sun.” So, he reasons, “not more divisible, nay less divisible is the nature of the Son towards the Father.” “The godhead” is “not accruing to the Son,” as if the Son had to acquire divinity, as Origen seems to suggest in his interpretation of John 1:1.

In contrast, Origen says: “By being ‘with *the* God’ he [that is Jesus] always continues to be ‘God.’ But [Jesus] would not have this if he were not with God, and he would not remain God if he did not continue in unceasing contemplation of the depth of the Father.”³² In other words, Jesus has to continue to contemplate God the Father to reflect God. If he ceased contemplating, he would cease to reflect God and be God, because there is no radiance from within him but only what he gathers up.

For Athanasius, however, divinity is a property of the Son, not a continual acquisition, “the Father’s godhead being in the Son, so that he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father in Him.” Therefore, he challenges all: “Wherefore, should not such a one be called One in substance?”³³ And Athanasius wraps his orthodox doctrine up with illustrative biblical imagery: “the Son’s genuine relation towards the Father, and the Word’s proper relation towards God, and the unvarying likeness of the radiance towards the light”³⁴

Athanasius, of course, realizes this illustration of the sun and its radiance is “mean indeed and very dim” when imaging God, but it does lift our eyes above our nature. And by doing so, Athanasius declares “who can even imagine that the radiance of light ever was not, so that he should dare to say that the Son was not always, or that the Son was not before His generation? or who is capable of separating the radiance from the sun, or to conceive of the fountain as ever void of life, that he should madly say, ‘The Son is from nothing,’ who says, *I am the life*, or ‘alien to the Father’s substance,’ who says, *He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father?*”³⁵

UNPACKING A REASONABLE APPROACH TO THE EDUCATIONAL USE OF IMAGERY TO GLIMPSE GOD

So, with what are we left here? Are we going to be served one more installment in the Donnell and Connall saga, where these animated theologues take Athanasius to task, correcting his own use of the sun and radiance imagery by demanding he stick solely to the discoursing words of the Athanasian Creed?

Reducing the acceptable explanation of the Trinity to reciting the words of the Athanasian Creed clearly counters the practice of Athanasius himself, who, as we see, employed the analogy in Hebrews 1:3 as a major component of his proof that Jesus did indeed share substance with the Father and was God in the flesh.

bore for our sakes.”

31 Ibid., 3.11-12 ¶41-¶42 (140-41), See also 2.23.51 (153).

32 Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John Books 1-10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C. Catholic University of America Press, 1989), Book 3.18. 99.

33 Ibid., 2.24 ¶52-¶53 (154-55).

34 Athanasius, “In Defence of the Nicene Definition,” 5.8 ¶24 (pp. 40-41). Athanasius does refer to Jesus as being seen by human witnesses as “the Wisdom and the Power of God” during the incarnation, but without the Proverbs 8 reference in his *On the Incarnation*, rev. ed., trans. by A Religious of C.S.M.V. (Yonkers, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), ¶19 (p. 91).

35 Ibid., 3.10 ¶12.

The fact of the matter is that analogic language is endemic to the Bible, for example, in the metaphorical use of Old Testament imagery like “rock,” featured in Moses’s farewell song to Israel, where God is depicted as a rock. What does this tell us about God’s attributes? Deuteronomy 32:4 uses the image to depict the Lord’s durable perfection, justice, faithfulness, purity. Verse 15 refers to the rock (*tsur*) of salvation (*yeshu‘ah*). So, rock depicts firm security in salvation, in this case foolishly rejected. Verse 18 mixes metaphors and speaks of the Rock begetting (*hul*) or bringing forth Israel with labor pains.³⁶ Verses 30 and 31 compare the superiority of Israel’s Rock to defeat their enemies’ rock. The image of rock is used throughout the Old Testament in Psalms 18, 31, 46, Isaiah 17, 51, and elsewhere. Other images are a fortress, a shepherd, a husband to Israel, and many more.³⁷

The New Testament is filled with imagery depicting our Creator as a loving father of a profligate son, a vineyard owner with criminals as hirelings, a wealthy woman in search of a lost coin, a wealthy master who is rebuked at the gracious offer to share a feast (Luke 14:15-23). In these illustrations, we learn about God’s patience, generosity, questing for us, and love, as well as God’s justice and punishment at those who reject the attributes under the category of love extended to them.

For those who want to explore this terrain further, I invite you to join me on a much more thorough journey through images that interpret God’s nature, along with more insights from Jesus’s as well as Athanasius’s and other biblical and theological luminaries’ use of illustrations to depict God correctly in my new book *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* from Kregel Academic.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If we are going to follow the Bible as our standard and guides like the prophets, Jesus, himself, and Athanasius as our models, we are going to have to realize that the use of imagery to describe God does not violate the biblical or historic Christian standards. The use of analogic language to describe God cannot in itself be wrong and does not necessarily lead to heresy. The way figurative language is shaped, presented, and interpreted is what can be right or wrong.

Further, quoting a creed is not a failsafe solution, as Athanasius demonstrated in his critique of the competing creeds of his day, starting with the Dedication Creed of AD 341 on through a variety of creeds of descending Christology down to the Council of Sirmium’s AD 357 statement that Hilary of Poitiers dubbed “The Blasphemy of Sirmium.” This creed prohibited any “mention” or “exposition” of equal substance (*homousion*) or even the semi-Arian “like substance” (*homoiousion*) in order to claim that the Father is “greater” than the Son in “honour, renown, and deity.”³⁸

Therefore, theological discursive and even creedal language is no more safe than is analogy for describing God. No creed is infallible, canonical, or inerrant, even orthodox ones. We need continually to test every word against the Bible’s revelation and never give any non-canonical discursive or figurative or even creedal language the status of Scripture, if it is not the Bible text.

As for a good rule for our daily practice in teaching about the Trinity to our children, our parishioners, and our students, if Athanasius, the great defender of orthodoxy, followed the biblical example and used a biblical image, why wouldn’t we?

36 To translate the Hebrew text, I am using A. Philip Brown II and Brian W. Smith, *A Reader’s Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 356 with its helpful footnotes of Hebrew words that occur less than 100 times, for the pointing, using *The SBL Handbook of Style*’s 5.1.2.1. Consonants and 5.1.2.2 Vowels charts.

37 For an interesting exposition of a variety of biblical images for the Triune God, see Henry F. Stevenson, *Titles of the Triune God: Studies in Divine Self-Revelation* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1956).

38 See Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 45.

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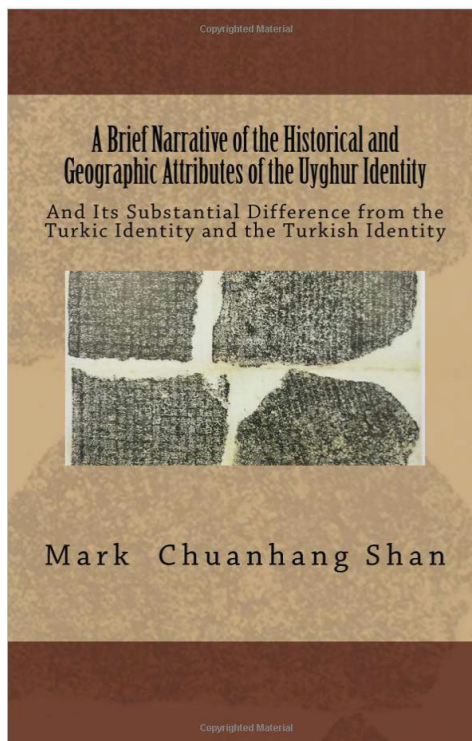
A Brief Narrative of the Historical and Geographic Attributes of the Uyghur Identity

---- And Its Substantive Difference from the Turkic Identity and the Turkish Identity

Mark Chuanhang Shan (2018)

The 144-page book is slightly modified from a portion of Shan's doctoral dissertation. The four-chapter English version of Shan's dissertation, *The Historical Uyghur Identity and its Attributes from Kocho Civilization and East-Syriac Christianity*, was submitted in the summer of 2018.

Shan's dissertation adopts a historical anthropology approach coupled with religious studies, historical analysis and careful textual analysis of original historical records to formulate a **five-dimensional attributes system of geography, history, ethnicity, religion and civilization** that is used to explore the historical transformation of the Uyghur ethnic identity and ultimately to construct a new understanding of the Uyghur identity that fully reflects Uyghur history. Shan undertook the study with the hope of offering to the Uyghur people an alternative choice of their identity.



Through careful study of the historical and geographic attributes, this book traces the changes of the Uyghur identity, and reveals that the Uyghurs are neither Turks nor Turkish, thus clarifying a long-standing misunderstanding of the Uyghur identity. Given that the history of the Uyghurs is complex, this book provides valuable research results from an academic perspective to this field of study.

This book is published in November of 2018 by the Chinese Christian Academic Association (formerly the Chinese Christian Theological Association), Boston (www.ccaa2009.org). It was founded in 2009 as a platform where Chinese Christian scholars can freely voice their academic viewpoints and encourages them toward great academic achievements in their academic pursuits.

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Use the link to purchase a hard copy of the book on amazon.com:

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**Review Article of *John Song: Modern Chinese Christianity and the Making of a New Man* by Daryl R. Ireland
(Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020)**

Mark Chuanhang Shan

In the introduction of this book, Daryl R. Ireland claims, “This is the story of how [John] Song Shangjie built modern Chinese Christianity amidst the tumultuous years of the early twentieth century” (10). If you only read the introduction and the conclusion of the book, you would gain the impression that this work is simply a biography of Song Shangjie and a positive approach to his legacy on modern Chinese Christianity, uninfluenced by whatever personal beliefs the author may have.

As I read page after page of this book, my initial awe and respectful academic expectation gradually shifted into an understanding that this book is really driven by an unfriendly hermeneutic and provides a fundamental liberal or even secular version of the “story behind the story of John Song” (xvii) as “the origin story of Song Shangjie is hidden in the oily cloth of myth and obscurity” (11). This new narrative appears to be created to downplay aggressively both the legacy and image of the greatest Christian revivalist figure in Chinese Protestant history as well as further deconstruct the Chinese fundamentalist-conservative evangelical Christian miracle-oriented faith model that is rooted in Dr. Song Shangjie’s time and fortified by his ministry.

As expected, the intended audience of this book is the Christian community, conservative and liberal. It is thus important to keep in mind, regardless of one’s background, that this book’s deconstructive effect on Dr. Song’s personal image and his conservative Christian revivalist legacy is accomplished by the author’s use of common academic tools including textual analysis and historical analysis, which have both been used by left wing scholars to deconstruct the authority of the Bible. He also employs the methodology of demythologization. Coupled with a primitive soldiering spirit of analytic philosophy, all of these tools have been used powerfully in the past century and are utilized with a radical naturalist model in this book to stamp out the supernaturalist-oriented thinking model.

The book, or well-designed narrative based on carefully selective materials, constructs two storylines as its main ideas. The first storyline covers the story of John Song, and it is primarily drawn from the Chinese Christian community, public media, and Western conservative Christian reports, John Song’s diaries, summaries, etc. This storyline strictly and carefully follows the facts and phenomenon through its use of abundant primary resources and sound research. By contrast, the second storyline is much more dismissive, offering a deconstructing interpretation of the story of John Song based on a mixture of fragmented truths and facts that the author has interpreted and weaved together into a misleading picture that diminishes the conservative Christian faith and theology reflected in Dr. John Song’s ministry as well as the respective Chinese conservative Protestant movements from a century ago to the present time.

1. DECONSTRUCTING DR. SONG’S PERSONAL CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND THE MODERN CHINESE CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT’S SPIRITUALITY

While providing a factual statement that Dr. John Song was the most famous revivalist in China before WWII (between 1928 and 1940) as “more than one hundred thousand people prayed for a new life at one of his meetings. By the end of his twelve-year career in the pulpit, more than 10 percent of all Chinese Protestants in the world had decided to abandon their old lives during one of his revival meetings in order to ‘transform into a new person’” (10). The “Introduction: *The Quest to Become New*” also reminds readers that one cannot ignore the impact of the May Fourth

Movement and the social political vision of a New China on John Song in his earlier years and on his later efforts to strive for a new, modern Chinese Christianity. The author's writing suggestively implies that Song's motivation was to create a new China through Christianity, or at the very least through Christian social justice services, which he saw as the only way to fulfill successfully the vision of the May Fourth Movement (9-11, 13, 15-16). The main point being communicated here is that Western Christianity provided the secular political calling from which were constructed spiritual needs for the Chinese that in turn reflected and carried out the spirit of the May Fourth Movement as the goal of Song's ministry and of modern Chinese Christianity.

"Chapter One: The Dissolution" tells the factual story of how John went to Union Theological Seminary in New York when he was twenty-four years old in 1926, after he earned his PhD in Chemistry, following six years of study, including his undergraduate years and two graduate degrees in Ohio (13-14), and was self-admitted (regardless of his initial resistance to the suggestion insisted by psychiatrist Dr. Charles Lambert and Professor A. L. Swift Jr.) into the Bloomingdale [Mental] Hospital in 1927 after publicly claiming to have had a personal mystical experience with supernatural Christian beings (17-19). The deconstructing aspect of this comes through in that, by presenting all of the primary sources, including Song's diary, the author shows, through the lens of Union Theological Seminary and the mental hospital, that John Song wrote and talked about how he had visions and mystical experiences with supernatural beings, especially Jesus's Mother Mary. Song's interpretation of the Gospels was written in such a way that "was lucid and first reads like a comedic parody of the genre. But Song was terribly serious" (21).

All of the above statements and behaviors of John Song would very much disturb the conscience of Chinese Protestants in John's time as well as today, not so much because of the hospital admittance but because of his mystical relationship with Mother, presumably Mary, who is regarded as a Catholic idol from the perspective of conservative Chinese Protestants. It is unclear as to why the author does not add footnotes of either the original English or Chinese words from Song's diary throughout the book, as they would allow for readers to check the interpretation and translation at the very least for academic accountability.

When I checked this quoted portion against the original, handwritten English texts of the diaries, I arrived at an understanding that was quite different from that of the author. I saw that the way in which John Song described his pious, mystical, emotional and spiritual experiences in relation to the Mother could be seen inaccurately as gnostic, especially given how his non-native English is written. Even so, Song consistently referred to this relationship as one that existed between a "we" or "us" and "mother," not an "I" and "mother," the latter of which is the author's interpretation. For example, the author writes: "Eventually, before 'zeal for mother has almost burnt us up,' the two wed" (23). This quote is extracted from the March 31, 1927 entry in Dr. Song's diary. I have transcribed the original handwritten English text of the paragraph here:

The morning walk is very thrilling, our heart is filled with mother love. We pray and kiss mother with all our heart. We learn to live in her completely. We love Father and all the brothers & sisters. The ground is well furrowed and the barrow-man is at work. [Another line] We finish our third basket --- prized greatly by our Mother. We build the foundation of another small basket which is already pretty because Mother teaches us to do. We are at the high tide of our love for Mother. The zeal for mother has almost burnt us up. We learned to be patient --- Father + His chosen servants will do the rest. We learn to be faithful and do our best. Everything surrounding us seems to aid us!¹

From this one can see that the story was a religious metaphor written in a Christian format, and Ireland's interpretation, "the two wed" is hasty, given the context of this entry. Thus, one

1 *Song Shangjie Diary*, March 31, 1927 entry, "John Sung Papers (1919-1944), Call Number: RG 263, Yale University Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

cannot interpret it so liberally to mean that John Song imagined he really married the Mother, because he writes, “We learn to live in her completely.” As Song deliberately uses the words “we” and “us” in his writing about a relationship with Mother, it is important to determine to whom “we” and “Mother” refers. My initial interpretation is that, for Protestant Christians who are familiar with the New Testament, “we” refers to Christians, and “Mother” refers to either the Church or the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we live in the Church and the Holy Spirit, both of which teach us in spiritual ways.

The author also references and interprets a passage from the April 4, 1927 entry in Dr. Song’s diary:

Song described the ceremony in his journal: “Then we have a marriage contract. . . . he trusts his wife as the temporary God of All—the voices of the dead are happy because God and Goddess knows [*sic*] their pain and suffering. We are immediately engaged and marry in the evening.” The service happened in Song’s hospital room in the presence of Mary Magdalene, Mary Clopas, and seven thousand chosen ones who were designated as honorary queens. Song and the Mother made pledges of fidelity to one another, celebrating that now, “They alone are the creators.” They consummated the ceremony with a “holy kiss and holy union.” Intimate communions was theirs at last” (23, 25).

In the original diary entry, the paragraphs following these quoted lines above include valuable information for decoding Song’s “marriage” that evening. I have transcribed the related portions of the original hand-written texts from Dr. Song’s April 4, 1927 entry here:

We are immediately engaged and marry in the evening. The marriage ceremony consists of holy kiss and holy union. [Next paragraph] The spiritual ways of the husband are thus recovered to a great extent. The child is born in the evening. His name is called John. The name of God is called Christ, Goddess called Jesus and the child is the holy Spirit to be given for the redemption purpose. The tears of the wife (Mary Mother of Jesus) is (*sic*) thus wiped off. The family is very happy indeed. [Another paragraph] They both agree not to have any kiss or union with any others. They alone are the creators.²

With the context provided in these subsequent lines, one can conclude that, from Dr. Song’s Chinese Protestant perspective, the continuously mentioned Mother in his diary entries refers to the Holy Spirit. My interpretation is as follows: The engagement and marriage occur between we Christians and the Holy Spirit. According to Song: “God is called Christ,” and if we rephrase the second part of this poor “Chinglish” sentence, we can understand that “Goddess is the holy Spirit to be given for the redemption purpose and called Jesus and the child [John the Baptist].” The wife in the next sentence is not to be confused with the Holy Spirit though, because Dr. Song clarifies in parentheses that it refers to Mary Mother of Jesus. In the final sentence, the creators refer to God (Christ) and Goddess (Holy Spirit). As a native Chinese writer, I can easily understand this seemingly complicated graphic-oriented thinking model influenced by Chinese literature writing traditions. It is not a coincidence that, when I first became a Christian, I used to think that the Holy Spirit played the role of Mother in parallel with the heavenly Father. Jesus Christ was the first-born Son as the Savior, and we Christian brothers and sisters are the siblings of Jesus Christ in this perfect spiritual Family. Readers should bear in mind that for Chinese people, writing in a diary about one’s personal life is a very private act and often involves a lot of free thinking that is not intended for other people to read and study, and Song was writing during the 193 days he spent in the mental hospital (31).³

2 Song *Shangjie Diary*, April 4, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library).

3 Song *Shangjie Diary*, August 30, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). According to Song’s diary, it

Furthermore, in this chapter Ireland also pointed out that after the failed escape from the mental hospital, Song decided to change his tactics (29). Ireland speculates that “[f]or one thing, Song had taken to writing in Chinese as a way to prevent the doctors from glimpsing what was going on in his mind. The decision was calculated and cunning, effectively masking from the doctors his magical thinking and the fact that he was still very much enamored with *shenmu*, the Queen Mother (29).” Notably, one should not ignore the Chinese entries in Song’s diaries and large amounts of them appeared after June 23, the day he failed to escape from the mental hospital. Even so, readers may be misled here by Ireland’s half-true implication that Song’s Chinese writings are indication of insanity or deception.

In addition, the claim that Song writing in Chinese was a “calculated and cunning” means to cover “the fact that he was still very much enamored with *shenmu* [divine Mother]” does not hold when the English and Chinese entries are compared for how often and in what manner Song mentions “Mother” or “divine Mother.” In entries after June 23 through July 23 immediately following Song’s failed escape, among more than 500 lines of Chinese writing, “Mother” and “divine Mother” are only mentioned about enough times to comprise one line of text if all the instances were placed together. In entries from July 24 through August 31, in Chinese writing Song mentions his real mother around eight times in the context of his dreams and the divine Mother around thirteen or so times in the context of his daily life. In the English entry of March 31 alone though, the Mother is mentioned over thirty times, indicating the great difference between mentions of the Mother in English vs. Chinese entries, with many more in the former. There are also great differences between the manner in which Song talks about the Mother in Chinese entries as opposed to English ones. Regarding his real mother, Song talks about how much he misses and loves her, but whenever he mentions the Mother/divine Mother (*mulshen-mu*), he writes briefly and with much less sentimental expression or mention of mystical feelings compared to the English entries from March and April. Most mention of the Mother is related to communication from the being to Song through its role as the Holy Spirit which we analyzed earlier. For example, Song mentioned the Mother prophesying, urging, reminding, and suggesting him to do and understand something or be on guard against someone, etc. In addition, Song mentioned the divine Father (*shenfu*) once⁴ in the context of his theological and devotional reflection as well as a dream when the divine Mother told him something.⁵ In both occasions, the mention is brief and comprises a tiny portion of the entire collection of Chinese entries.

The argument presented by Ireland that Song wrote in Chinese “as a way to prevent the doctors from glimpsing what was going on in his mind” is partly true on a speculative basis, but the claim that in doing so, Song was “effectively masking from the doctors his magical thinking” is misleading. There is much less evidence of “magical thinking” in Song’s Chinese writing than his earlier English writings. Therefore, writing in Chinese as a cover for his magical thinking was certainly not the case.

Why then did Dr. Song begin writing more in Chinese? By considering the content that is absent from Song’s English writing, one could reasonably speculate that Song started writing more in Chinese simply because he was mentally drained. The failed escape brought anger and disappointment to Song’s emotional being, and coupled with strange nightmares and physical sickness, writing in Chinese would have been easier given the mental strain he was already suffering. Additionally, Song kept mentioning his anxiety, physical suffering from an anal fistula, depression, and the demonic titles he “rewarded” some medical staff with, all of which he might not

was 194 or 195 days Song spent in the hospital. “在医馆百九四日矣，蒙召二〇一日矣。” “在医馆百九五天。”

4 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 24, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “旧约二十六试，新约十八试，神父十三试，圣母八试，共六十五试。”

5 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 22, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “又梦家母迫逐我，……圣母告我，家母非真母，……”

want the doctors to see lest it give them reason to keep him in the hospital longer.

For example, in the entries of July and August 1927, the last two months before Song was finally released from the hospital, he often complained of bad sleep with many strange nightmares and deteriorating memory, likely due to the stress of longing to be free from the mental hospital,⁶ especially after his prior failed escape from the hospital. In the August 23rd entry, Song mentioned, “today is the two-month anniversary of my (failed) escape” and “the female doctor said that the hospital will send me back to China. But if [I try] to escape again, I shall never get to leave the hospital. [After hearing that,] my bottom [anal fistula] was terribly itchy.”⁷ In Chinese, Song also wrote about titles that he gave to the doctors and referred to the main doctor as “the demonic doctor” (魔医). He gave other hospital staff and patients similar demonic titles that seemed to match their personalities, although they were highly coded and sometimes delivered through metaphorical narratives. Even so, Song did not talk about all of the hospital staff in this critical and hostile way. He recognized that some of the staff were good people, showing them respect or at least neutrality in referring to them as “the good medical assistant,” “good nurse,” “good doctor,” “the female doctor,” and “female nurse.”⁸ Song also talked about a new medical assistant who was kind and sympathetic towards him. This assistant secretly sent out two letters on Song’s behalf on June 26th. One of them was a letter written by Song requesting for help, and the other was possibly a letter of advocacy that supported Song’s request to be released.

Occasionally, readers could indeed interpret Song as a “mystical thinker” through the Chinese writings if wild dreams could be considered legitimate “mystical thinking.” Take the August 26th entry for example on the “five-month [*sic* six-month] anniversary of being in the hospital for a hundred ninety days,” where Song mentioned a nightmare from the previous night that included “doctors dissecting and examining a Mexican brain,” and “a group of naked female nurses and doctors” standing by his bed.⁹ For those attempting to prove Song’s insanity, such sentences would be strong and exciting pieces of evidence to justify such a diagnosis. For others though, it seems clear enough that these are simply cases of bad dreams.

Ultimately, Song’s Chinese writing increased significantly in his diary entries from June through August. Song mentions the Mother (*mu*) and divine Mother (*shenmu*) only in the entry of August 22 (as the author quotes). Aside from the content that Song would not want the doctor to see such as the demonic titles, his bad dreams, and his anxiety, the majority of the Chinese writing is about pure theological reflection and biblical devotions written in a clear and rational manner. For example, the long entries of August 23rd and 24th contain pages of devotions in Chinese mixed with self-encouraging words and brief mention of daily activities. The other content of the Chinese entries covers Song’s daily activities in great but boring detail.

Finally, according to Ireland, Song was released from the hospital because of his “calculated

6 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 27, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “晨起时，中心忧甚，因久楼狂狱，不得释放。怨天尤人，但力自压，复归清静。” Transcribed from Song’s hand-writings in traditional Chinese characters to simplified Chinese with matching punctuations: “Getting up in the morning, my heart is deeply troubled, because being in the storied building of the mental prison [hospital] for so long without being released. I complained heaven and people, and then with strong self-control, I restored peace of quiet [mind].”

7 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 23, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “本日乃两月纪念遁脱受难日。……回房遇医妇，真魔及父魔在焉，悬白窗纱，笑真魔之不我信，想我遁脱。医妇言医馆将送我回国，若遁脱，永不得离医馆。下落痒甚。”

8 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 14, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “良医到此，与我投笑。”; *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 30, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “七楼之良医佐已迁往二楼。”; *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 26, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “良佐足痛，借我睡椅，许之。坐椅树下，遇女佐行度骄甚，……”；*Song Shangjie Diary*, August 30, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “医妇至，不敢求。……医妇在焉，亦不见夜禁，与医妇谈心。……琴魔代医妇扫拂，医妇喜之。”

9 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 26, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). How Freud would interpret this scientifically, Mark Shan wonders. “割医剖览一墨西哥人之脑。割医前闭以衣而后裸，群女医佐亦然。墨西哥人因狂杀母。割后，群女医裸体床侧，非男非女，怒而醒。……本日乃五月【实为六月】纪念，在医院百九十日矣。”

and cunning” decision to write in Chinese, and “[m]ore important still, Song had become a financial drain on the hospital” (29). As our thorough reading and analysis of Song’s Chinese writings above make clear, the former given reason for Song’s release is unlikely to be true. The latter reason which claims financial strain seems to be a stretch, even if it is justifiable. Yet, in the entry of July 13th, Song wrote in Chinese that according to dialogue between his visiting friend and the doctor, “the demonic doctor said falsely that the medical expense was covered by donation.”¹⁰ Song did not elaborate about this in further detail.

In carefully reading Song’s Chinese entries though, clues arise that point to two more likely reasons for Song’s release. The primary reason is that Song agreed to return to China should he be released, and the secondary reason is that Song gave a statement to the hospital saying that they did not treat him badly and his mind was not clear for a long time.

On the first reason, from the entry of August 30th, the day Song was finally released from the hospital, Song recalled that the “demonic doctor” allowed for his release on the condition that he must return to China after the negotiations of a couple “Mr. & Mrs. Bird,” presumably Mr. & Mrs. Fowler (29). Mr. Fowler was the pastor advocating on Song’s behalf. The details of this entry match what Song wrote in his August 19th entry mentioning the prior evening visit by his primary doctor where they discussed sending Song back to China.¹¹

On the second reason, back in July, Song had written two entries detailing early attempts from the hospital to ensure he would not speak badly about them in the future should he be released. On July 16th, Song wrote one Chinese line in the middle of a page of English text saying, “I must be modest and yield to the hospital for the sake of my life.”¹² Song also wrote in Chinese that a friend came to the “demonic doctor” to try and explain why Song had accused the hospital of treating him badly and ease their concerns about him potentially speaking negatively about them in the future.¹³ Furthermore, during Song’s last day, the “demonic doctor” tested Song by asking him why he accused the hospital doctors of potentially harming him. In order to be released, Song had to admit that his mind had not been clear for a long time, and, in fact, the hospital had treated him well. His diary entries obviously detail otherwise, but this statement was another necessary condition for Song’s release from the hospital.

At 9:30 AM on August 30th, the “demonic doctor” finally decided to release John from the hospital. Song left with Mr. and Mrs. Fowler after bidding farewell to the “demonic doctor” and his primary doctor.¹⁴ By meeting the hospital’s conditions of returning to China and denying negative treatment from them, the hospital left no credible room for Song to ever claim with legitimacy in the future that he was never insane. Even so, Song’s Chinese diary entries detail the mistreatment and misdiagnosis clearly.

In addition to the two reasons mentioned above, there was a third factor involved in Song’s ultimate release from the hospital: the role of a so-called Mr. Wa (瓦君). Although Song only details in his July 16th entry two intercessors in the process of his release (the primary doctor and the good medical assistant), this Mr. Wa also played a vital role.¹⁵ As early as July 4th, Song’s primary doctor notified him of a letter from Mr. Wa who promised he would free him.¹⁶ On July 24th, Song wrote,

10 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 13, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “魔医伪言，医费出自恤款。”

11 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 19, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “（昨夜私医至，论送回国事）。”

12 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 16, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “我必谦让在此医馆，为生命计。”

13 Ibid. “友人来谒，向魔医道我只聪颖、刚直及巧于说经，以解释我前之固意攻击医馆。”

14 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 30, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “向魔医私医及儿道安。”

15 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 16, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “私医待我婉转于魔医前，医佐代我婉转于瓦君前。”

16 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 4, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “私医来谒，言得瓦信，许以自由。”

“I handed the letter from Mr. Wa to my primary doctor. The doctor said [although] Mr. Wa allows me to be discharged from the hospital, [I] need to be cared [for] and disciplined by [my] people [after my release].”¹⁷ In the entry of July 25th, Song received three letters. One of them was from Mr. Wa, to whom Song replied with a poem discussing potential post-release matters.¹⁸ In the entry of July 27th, Song notes receiving a letter from Mr. Wa. In the entry of August 4th, he writes, “two Chinese friends came here saying Mr. Wa will allow me to be discharged from the hospital if I am willing to go back to the country [China], and he will assist me with travel expenses. According to Mother’s order, I declined.”¹⁹ Evidently, Song accepted these conditions later that month.

From the context of Song’s diary entries, it seems likely that Mr. Wa was Chinese and a powerful enough person to negotiate conditions of Song’s release with the hospital. Who he was remains unclear, but it’s possible that he was a diplomat from the Chinese Consulate in the United States, who played a crucial and helpful role in the event according to today’s Chinese Christian community.

Given all of this, Song’s release from the hospital was made possible by his acceptance of their conditions and the negotiation efforts made mostly by Mr. Wa and Mr. Fowler (“Mr. Bird”).

In conclusion, the argument that Song’s decision to write in Chinese “was calculated and cunning, effectively masking from the doctors his magical thinking and the fact that he was still very much enamored with *shenmu*, the Queen Mother (29)” does not hold against the actual evidence of his diary entries. Song’s writing in Chinese was much clearer than his English entries, and contained much less “evidence” of mystical thinking than his English entries did. When someone undergoes the stress and mental fatigue that Song did after 190+ days in a mental hospital, they will inevitably lose the brain power necessary to continue writing easily in foreign languages. Although Song referred to some doctors and hospital staff in a negative manner, he retained clear-headedness evidenced by the fact that not all of his references to the staff were so negative. Finally, although the book tried hard to argue the opposite, Song’s wild dreams were just dreams, not evidence of “mystical thinking,” because his entries detail his daily life and activities clearly.

On a final note, according to Ireland, release from the hospital was meaningful for Song because “Song achieved what he hoped for: unfettered freedom to pursue his mystical studies” (30). In fact, however, after his release, Song travelled the next morning with the Fowler couple to Cincinnati, Ohio. His entry from August 31st, the day after his release, details “sunny and beautiful” (晴美) weather, with a noticeable lack of any metaphorical narratives, Pentecostal (“mystical”) writing style, and “coded” wording. Instead, this Chinese entry is written in a clear and straightforward style with a relaxed tone. There is no theology, devotions, or reflections on faith, but a lot of information about his daily travels and visits to friends in great details, as if he was in the States for the first time.²⁰

As I have not checked all the original diary entries against all the quotations and interpretations of the author that are made in the rest of the book, let us optimistically assume that there are no more similar misinterpretations and disinformation.

2. DECONSTRUCTING THE INTEGRITY OF DR. SONG AND CONSERVATIVE WESTERN MISSIONARIES

“Chapter Two: A New Man” factually states that John Song returned to China in November 1927 (33) and “became a schoolteacher for the Xing-hua Methodist Church in the spring of

17 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 24, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “与私医以瓦君之信。医瓦君许我出医馆，但须人戒导。”

18 *Song Shangjie Diary*, July 25, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “又书一长信于瓦君，谋善后事宜；函附一诗。”

19 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 4, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library). “两中友到此，言瓦君许我出医馆，若我愿回国；并欲助我路费。依母命，辞之。”

20 *Song Shangjie Diary*, August 31, 1927 entry (Yale University Divinity School Library).

1928. By that fall, the conference hired him as a full time evangelist” (38). With support from the missionary community, Song gave a comprehensive testimony about his experience of being born again at Union and Bloomingdale Hospital. This news was widely circulated in China and consequently provided him with a new mission. “Song’s vision of becoming a New Man through Jesus Christ” (55) inspired many Chinese people to follow his transformation example and also “modeled for China the Christian alternative to secular reinvention” (55).

The deconstructive line of this chapter lies in the author’s statement that Christian fundamentalist missionary groups created a “polemicized version of Song’s experience” in New York’s Union Theological Seminary to meet the needs of the fundamentalist missionary camp in China as well as the Chinese May Fourth Movement thinking model (41-42), while New York’s Union Theological Seminary, as a liberal modernist wing of a Christian institution, persecuted him as a fundamentalist conservative Christian with a Ph.D. in science. Additionally, according to this chapter, Song gave his testimonies in exaggerated and untruthful ways for the purpose of evangelism, and “[w]ithout a doubt facts were slippery in Song’s mouth. He spit them out in abbreviated, touched-up, or invented forms, according to convenience” (50). The author questions, “Song declared himself a New Man. But was he?” and then points out that Song’s “lying” was not for the sake of lying but rather “because he hoped ‘people would be saved’” through his words and “tall tales” (50). Thus, the author’s “New Man” title for Song entails a new, background-washed identity in which the insane man is warped as a pious figure.

3. DECONSTRUCTING THE RELIGIOUS AUTHENTICITY OF DR. SONG’S PERSONAL REVIVAL MINISTRY

“Chapter Three: A New Means” reveals that Song’s mission was incredibly successful; “A significant minority, somewhere around 10 percent of all Chinese Protestants, were mobilized by Song’s polarizing rhetoric” (83). (What an interesting word “minority” is!) According to Ireland, behind the amazing impact of Song’s ministry was “[t]he mighty wind of Pentecost...[and the fact that] Bethel [the organization providing a platform for Song] borrowed every technique that department stores were pioneering in China. They did what it took to bring people in” (73). The author likened Song to a traditional Chinese storyteller (similar to Western comedians and talk show hosts), an insulting title from the perspective of the Chinese, in the sense that his popularity was based on the fact that “[he] entertained crowds with props, exaggerated gestures and mime... And just like a paid storyteller...His simple choruses were the storyteller’s way of reinforcing a point...Song looked and sounded just like any other traditional storyteller, except that his tales followed a different narrative arc” (74). Song “even reimagined biblical texts to make them align with his preaching” (76), and “[f]or many the revival was too compelling an experience. It offered mysterious, fascinating, frightening, comic, and lurid displays. No one, it seems, could pull their eyes away” (79).

“Dualisms tumbled out of his [Song’s] mouth left and right. Some even contradicted one another, not because Song was a fool, but because he never stopped to work them out systematically. The important thing was not the precise content, but the creation of a polarized world...No other options existed” (80). Additionally, “[t]he way Song boiled every choice down to a binary option did not come strictly from revivalism; it also imitated the political language that surrounded him...He, like his political counterparts, wanted to intensify and simplify the choice before people, hoping to make them act” (81).

4. DECONSTRUCTING DR. SONG’S ABILITY AND THE POWER OF HIS PREACHING

“Chapter Four: A New Location” states that Song began his independent itinerant evangelism in January of 1934, “and he held revivals in Jiangsu,” Anhui, and Shandong provinces (95). Song found remarkable success in the city of Tianjin with assistance offered by the city’s elites, or, as the author refers to them, the “Bourgeois Backers,” an influential business family (100). Additionally, Song received help from a few of China’s late second president’s family members, specifically his

sister and daughter who attended some of Song's services (103-104). "Song capitalized on the prestige of Zhang Zhouxin and Li Fenglin. In a sense he borrowed it from them. While in Tianjin he stayed in the home of Guan Songsheng and Li Fenglin. There he enjoyed the service of their six or seven servants (they never appeared all at once, so he was unsure of the number)" (104).

"Yet, despite the relatively small numbers, it was among the urban minority that Song learned his trade" (96). "Song traveled much, but primarily kept to a narrow circuit of foreign-influenced urban areas" (97). "Happily for the purposes of this chapter, why Song could not secure a church venue for his revivals is less relevant than how his supporters dealt with it...What otherwise might have remained hidden was briefly revealed in Tianjin" (100). "The backers had to be moneyed... Song never wrote down who paid for the [revival gathering] hall, but his journals confirm his connections to Tianjin's elites" (101). "The fact that Song maintained close friendships with people of the bourgeoisie and so clearly articulated their concerns raises the question of whether or not he was their stooge" (110).

In addition, Song's "revivals generated substantial income...from thank offerings, the sale of his books, and unsolicited gifts" (104). "The upshot was that by 1934 Song already had enough money to have a home in the French Concession of Shanghai, one of the most expensive districts in all of China. Song certainly had his own money; his genius was not flaunting it" (105). This may impress readers that Song got rich purposely from performing Christian ministry.

5. DECONSTRUCTING DR. SONG'S BROAD APPEAL AND THE RELIGIOUS ATTRACTION OF HIS SERMONS

"Chapter Five: A New Audience" states that, although Chapter Four mentioned how successful Song's ministry was in Tianjin, "[o]ne would expect that Song had broad appeal...[but] [t]he truth is social classes rarely mixed in Song's meetings" (117). "[N]o more than a handful of elites showed up at his services in Tianjin or anywhere else" (114), so "by and large not the upper class nor the urban underclass" (117). "For all intents and purposes, his ministry was restricted to Tianjin's *xiaoshimin* [petty urbanites], a relatively narrow slice of the population that differentiated itself from the working class less by income and more by education and set hours for recreation" (118-119). "Financial insecurity, violence, sickness, and boredom were all intensified as the Tianjin economy bottomed out in 1934, the year Song arrived in town" (123).

"Moral decay was an axiomatic assumption for Song, many of his listeners, and revivalism generally" (129). "He shared how he honored his parents...since he was traveling on the road most of the time... What he could do, though, was to speak highly of them, especially his father, and he did so often. This tactic allowed Song to continue to pay lip service to the nonnegotiable virtue of Chinese society even as he vacated it of any specific behavior" (131). (Here Chinese readers of the book would think Song was hypocritical.) "Not only did he make salvation a choice, but he also made the gospel itself something like a product. He tailored the good news to speak to the anxieties and needs of those before him, which, in his case, was a niche market of petty urbanites" (139). The skill of contextualization without compromising *kerygma* displayed by Song should not be worded in a stretched or twisted way as though it was a secular commercial approach.

6. DECONSTRUCTING SONG'S EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY, ESPECIALLY AMONG WOMEN, IN SINGAPORE

"Chapter Six: A New Woman" states that, during the revival meetings in Singapore, "[w]hen he [Song] finished speaking, the response was overwhelming...approximately 10 percent of Singapore's Chinese Protestants were crammed together, enlisting to preach the gospel. Men, women, and children all solemnly pledged to evangelize the island. Clergy and laity both joined" (144-145). After being called to and inspired by Song's sermon, Christian women in Singapore established evangelistic teams that "impressively canvassed the island's 450,000 Chinese immigrants, declaring to all who would listen that Jesus saves" (164).

Yet, according to Ireland, the factor behind the success was that "[o]ften Song presented his

audiences a feminized Jesus... Indeed, Jesus often sounded like a coddling mother in Song's sermons. Song regularly put pet names or house names on Jesus' lips...In a particularly dramatic example of feminization, Song vividly described Jesus as a second Mary, the woman who poured her perfume on the Lord (John 12:1-8)" (149). The author also pointed out another side of Song's success that the evangelistic teams in Singapore learned that the "[c]onverts, therefore, were disproportionately represented by people who had gone to Christian schools in China, those who had grown up Roman Catholic, or persons who had formerly attended church" (165). "More and more teams faded away as the months passed" (166), and about seven years later, "[by] the time the Japanese invaded the island on February 15, 1942, the emaciated organization 'imperceptibly and quietly came to a standstill'" (166). It seems Ireland does not fully grasp the main aspects of the Christian revival movement, at least in China, because while the personal impact may have been long-term for many individuals, this kind of Christian movement was, in reality, short-term by nature. "Song joined other May Fourth [a secular political movement] radicals and reformers in promoting new places for women in Chinese society" (168). I do believe that it was a positive result of the movement, however, it later merged into the Communist movement. My point is that it was not a secular political agenda that impacted Song's approach but rather his Christian beliefs. As we can see from his sermons and mobilization of women to join his missions, Song had a very Christian perspective on the women's liberation movement.

7. DECONSTRUCTING DR. SONG'S HEALING MINISTRY WITH HIS OWN SICKNESS AND DEATH

"Chapter Seven: A New Body" states that healing became the focus of Song's sermons as it "was a core component of his popularity" (170) and reputation during his revival meetings. "Press reports highlighted his sensational and miraculous cures" (170). Song explained that "If what you preach is true...it will be evidenced with miracles" (186). For Song, "[h]ealth sprang out of holiness, not the other way around" (186). Ireland states that "When a heavenly spirit would take control of their bodies, shamans would breathe heavily and jump around rhythmically. Song did the same" (180). "Like shamans, Song also relied on talismans. In the temple setting, a charm was an edict written down by the possessed shaman that commanded the afflicting spirit to leave the sick person alone. ... Song used the Bible in similar ways" (180). "He said it bluntly: 'You should know, no matter what kind of sickness you have, it comes from sin! If you have sin, you have sickness. No sin, no sickness!'" (187). Ireland reflects, "Christ's atonement secured salvation and health, but the New Body always came in that order...Everything hung on confession" (188).

"Since his time in the United States, Song suffered from an anal fistula...To ask for human aid, he maintained, would contradict his own message of divine healing. Instead, he put his efforts into following his own prescription...He pled for mercy, admitting" (201) to many of sins. "When such thorough confessions still brought no relief, Song turned to self-care...He had become the living illustration from one of his own sermons...No matter how many times he reached out to Jesus or touched the Bible, he was not made well. He took to washing his underwear in the privacy of his own room. He dearly wanted to hide the soggy mess he peeled off after every service...Still, Song resisted medical intervention. It took the promise of friends that God had given them special revelations that he needed a doctor for Song to concede his body not only to the Lord, but also to physicians. For the last four years of his life, he received help from Western biomedicine, National medicine, six surgeries, the passing of time, and many prayers... Song died August 18, 1944; he was forty-two years old" (201-202).

At this point in the book, I was reminded of the biblical account in which people mocked Jesus Christ on the cross, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One" (Luke 23:35 NIV). Even apostle Paul, who performed miracles, including resurrection, had a physical health issue that could not be cured (2 Cor 12:7-10).

8. DECONSTRUCTING CHINESE FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELIC REVIVAL MOVEMENTS FROM DR. SONG'S TIME TO THE PRESENT-DAY

Daryl Ireland's "Conclusion *Modern Chinese Christianity*" states that "contemporary Chinese Christianity is centered on charismatic figures, often itinerant evangelists who operate free from institutional control... [and that] faith healing plays an important role in Christianity's growth" (204-205). "[W]hat is clear, with eight decades of hindsight, is that Song appears as the archetype and exemplar of what came to be the most popular Chinese expression of the Christian faith. To know the story of John Song and how he became a New Man is to understand the formation of modern Chinese Christianity" (207).

The story behind the story, according to the author's deconstructing thread present throughout the seven chapters of the book, remains an example of historical irony and the reporting of a false foundation for Song's legacy as well as for modern Chinese Christianity.

MY REFLECTIONS

Daryl Ireland has a Ph.D. degree in Mission Studies from Boston University School of Theology where he is Research Assistant Professor of Mission. He is also the director of the Chinese Christian Posters project and the co-director of the China Historical Christian Database (CHCD).²¹ Nevertheless, Ireland clearly deconstructs religious supernaturalism. The book has serious flaws.

Although I have a fundamentalist conservative Chinese House Church movement background, I seek to remind the author and the book's possible readers that, in a historical biographical work, one should restrain oneself from putting too much of one's subjective interpretation of the facts and phenomena in the book. Even if one took a liberal approach from a specific academic mindset, one should engage in as objective an approach as possible regardless of whether or not one agrees with where one's subject stands.

As a Christian scholar, I think it is a pity for me to see Ireland try to connect John Song's revival theology and healing ministry to the Pentecostal movement, which the Chinese Church generally disapproved of during Song's time and into today. It would not be very difficult to understand that, with an Anglican Methodist background, John Song's theology and his healing ministry reflected nothing more than the Methodist tradition that traces back to the theology and practice of its founder, John Wesley, and his successful ministry model in America (and England) from the eighteenth century on.

According to Ireland himself and his direct quotation of John Song, Dr. Song harshly criticized "speaking in tongues," which is the key label of Pentecostalism (and charismatic movement), and some of its other branches including some indigenous churches such as "Little Flock," "Jesus Family" and "True Jesus Church" as false prophets' teaching, since Dr. Song "spoke of these sects as dangerous *xiejiao*" (cults) and decided "none of them are saved" (87-88). Therefore, contrary to the narratives presented in chapters 3 (73) and 7 (180), Song's ministry was not associated with either the Pentecostal or traditional Chinese gnostic movements.

For the Chinese mainstream church in China and America today, Dr. Song's prophetic voice against movements such as "Little Flock" proved sound in the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s-70s, Watchman Nee's disciple Witness Lee developed his sect called "Local Church," based on the theological model of "Little Flock."

In addition, Song pointed out the danger of some Chinese Christians who were influenced by the patriotic theology of western Christianity "because it made the church a servant of the state rather than of Jesus Christ" (86-87). The accuracy of Dr. Song's prophetic warning was proved through the support of the three-self church movement, organized by the newly established CCP

21 <https://www.bu.edu/sth/profile/daryl-ireland/>; <https://www.bu.edu/sth/dr-daryl-ireland-joins-sth-center-for-global-christianity-and-mission/> (accessed September 2, 2022).

government of China after 1949, by many Chinese Christian laity and clergy including Watchman Nee, who might have been forcefully self-admitted, just as Dr. Song was to the mental hospital under pressure from Union Seminary in New York.

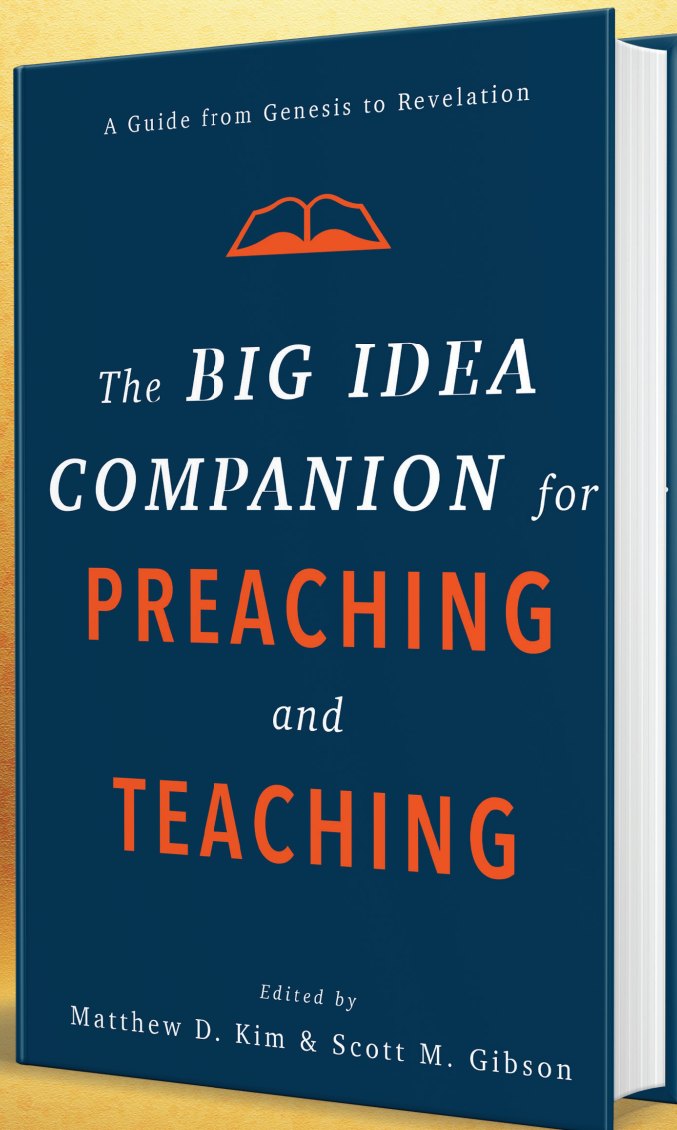
Moreover, deconstructing authentic conservative Christian faith and its religious phenomena from any perspective or for any purpose does it a disservice. As academics, it is vital to avoid journalistic-type writing that will undermine one's subject's integrity and legacy. It is even more crucial to avoid assertions on spiritual, faith, and theological issues of the conservative Chinese Christian community, represented by Dr. John Song, as an outsider, unless one clearly defines one's argument as liberal vs. conservative or naturalism vs. supernaturalism, instead of presenting it as "historical research" for a biography of a religious historic figure, as is the case with this book, *John Song*.

Additionally, from an objective psychological scientific methodology with a naturalist perspective, "the Value of Saintliness" in religion was birthed from the seeds of "emotional excitement" by William James in his landmark piece *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James' theory should have provided useful education for the zealous Union Seminary professors, the medical professionals that had Dr. Song in the mental hospital, and the author of this book, all of whom reflect a radical naturalist approach of "kicking against the pricks" by what appears to be cynically deconstructing Dr. Song's image, which represents Chinese conservative Christianity and its religious faith and spirit very well. Today, many who were inspired, converted and miraculously physically healed by Dr. Song's prayers and ministry are still alive inside and outside of China, telling people around them of their unforgettable amazing religious experience with Jesus Christ via the highly respected Dr. John Song.

Unfortunately, this author's decision to write the biography of the Chinese John Song who lived over a century ago was too narrow. Nevertheless, I do recommend that conservative seminaries and Christian individuals read this book in order to understand the "subjective deconstruction" approach, reassemble the fragmented and significantly misinterpreted historical facts provided inside, and thereby discern the amazing religious reflection of Dr. Song's legacy and his great sacrifices, against the narrative of the author.

Mark C. Shan, originally from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, has authored several books on Central Asia-Xinjiang studies. Three of his research articles were published in the *Africanus Journal* including "The Kingdom of God in Yurts: Christianity among Mongols in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries" (Vol. 3: No. 2, Nov. 2011), "The Scythians of Colossians 3:11: Their Origin and Their Legacy in Xinjiang, China Today" (Vol. 5: No. 2, Nov. 2013) and "Silk Road Christianity in Tarim and Turpan Basins Prior to AD 640 When Tang China Took Over Kocho Kingdom" (Vol. 13: No. 2, Nov. 2021). Mark Shan has an MA degree in religion from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2006) and an S.T.M degree in theology (2007) from Boston University, School of Theology. Currently he is a Ph.D. research student with North-West University, South Africa.

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**Review of *Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation* by Matthew D. Kim
(Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021)**

SCOTT M. GIBSON

Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation is squarely focused on helping pastors—preachers—gain an adjusted perspective on the sermons they preach. Kim claims that most North American preachers—and listeners for that matter—are more inclined to listen to sermons about success rather than to preaching about pain and suffering. His book is a corrective to the narrative of success that permeates society. Kim states, “I encourage pastors to preach less pain-free sermons and to preach more pain-full sermons where preachers disclose their own suffering and pain, which allows space to encourage listeners to identify and share their suffering in Christian community for the ultimate purpose of healing and transformation” (xii).

Matthew D. Kim approaches this needed perspective on preaching from extensive research, pastoral ministry experience and personal encounter with suffering. His hardships, including the murder of his younger brother, personal physical maladies, among other adversities, provide the reader with the sense of Kim’s credibility and expertise.

The book has two main sections. Throughout part 1, Kim discusses the different ways preachers and listeners bear and endure pain. In chapter 1, Kim sets up the book by asserting that preaching on pain and suffering is imperative for the preacher and for the congregation. In chapter 2, he explores the various types of pain and suffering listeners bring with them to worship—and calls for preachers to be aware of what their listeners face. In chapter 3, Kim provides a helpful method for preaching on pain. The second section, part 2, examines six categories of pain with which listeners wrestle—chapter 4, painful decisions; chapter 5, painful financial decisions; chapter 6, the pain associated with physical or mental health; chapter 7, the pain of loss; chapter 9, the pain of the power of sin.

As one reads the pages of this book, one can readily see the author demonstrating how the theory he suggests intersects with practice. Kim provides what can be called a “lived theology,” the outworking of theory-theology experienced in the everyday events of life. This is communicated through the Scriptures, research on the topic, personal narrative, and also the stories of other people. Each chapter ends with a series of discussion questions; and an appendix provides a “Worksheet for Understanding Personal Pain.”

This book is a much-needed contribution to the field of homiletics. While most preaching books recycle themes and issues in preaching, Matthew D. Kim breaks new ground. The chapters are instructive, informative, and encouraging, even though the topic itself is tough—for the preacher and for one’s listeners. There is much more that can be explored in this burgeoning area of study now that Kim has blazed the trail. The sensitivities regarding pain and suffering that Kim brings to light and encourages and instructs preachers to cultivate will serve to equip any pastor to become a better congregational exegete.

What Kim does in the pages of this book is to help preachers to face the needs of listeners, not overlooking them, but engaging with them. Kim quotes David H.C. Reed, who had a parishioner tell him, “Preachers seem always to be offering answers to questions I never ask.” However, in this book, Matthew D. Kim instructs readers (pastors/preachers) to ask the real questions—to provide the needed answers by exploring their pain and suffering and the preacher’s pain and suffering.

Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation is a must-read—by experienced preachers and burgeoning ones, too. The book will help recalibrate one’s preaching. Reading it will equip the preacher to look at any text and see how its truth will intersect with listeners, listeners who may appear to be whole on the surface but have cracks in their lives and who cry for pastoral sensitivity and expression—and the space, the freedom—to have that cry addressed, whether in the sermon as a whole, in the introduction, in questions that are raised, in illustrations, or in the conclusion. Listeners will evaluate themselves in response to the truth of the text, and they will meet the preacher, too.

This is a good place to be. It is where preachers want to be—with the people, with the church, with the called-out-ones as the truth of Scripture intersects with their lived experience, yes, their lived theology.

Scott M. Gibson, D.Phil. is the David E. Garland Professor of Preaching and the Director of the Ph.D. in Preaching Program at Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX. Gibson served on the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary faculty for twenty-seven years before receiving the call to Baylor University in 2018. His most recent books include *Preaching Hope in Darkness: Addressing Suicide from the Pulpit* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2020) with Karen Mason and *The Big Idea Companion for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), edited with Matthew D. Kim.



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Review of *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament: A Pentecostal Guide* by William A. Simmons (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021)

DASOL CHANG

In *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, seasoned New Testament scholar William A. Simmons examines the presence of the Holy Spirit in every book of the New Testament. Having taught in several different continents and written books on New Testament background and Pentecostal Bible studies, Simmons intends his latest book to be a bridge between the academy and the church, both “a source of biblical knowledge” and “a means for personal growth in the Holy Spirit” (x). The reader is “not only to master the content of the Bible but also to hear the voice of the Spirit in the Bible” (ix). The book is written especially for Pentecostal and charismatic readers, as its subtitle suggests.

In the introduction, the author explains the need for a Pentecostal guide to the Holy Spirit. The author uses the term *Pentecostal* not as a “label” that defines but as a hermeneutical “lens” that is colored by “the living presence of the Spirit of God” (2). The author argues that this Pentecostal lens is both “holistic and integrated” (3) and “comprehensive and cosmic” (5), and that both sound biblical exegesis and the global growth of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement call for a Pentecostal study of the New Testament. The rest of the book (chs. 1-19) carefully discusses the presence of the Holy Spirit in each book of the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation (except for Philippians, which comes after Colossians and Philemon, and Philemon, which is studied together with Ephesians and Colossians for their interdependence). Each chapter opens with a key phrase and a key verse that characterize the main role the Spirit plays in the book(s); introduces that theme and takes a “pause for prayer”; examines key themes and passages in the book(s) concerning the Holy Spirit; and concludes with a brief summary and a list of personal application points (“what does it mean for me?”).

What this reviewer appreciates the most about the book is precisely what the author aims to do in the book, namely, for the reader to be not only “biblically informed but also spiritually transformed” (ix). Although the book is a mere 227 pages (excluding Scripture index), it surveys important themes and work of the Holy Spirit in all 27 books of the New Testament, and each chapter is full of exegetical and theological insights. For example, in Chapter 7, “The Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians: The Spirit of Wisdom and Grace,” the longest and perhaps the finest of all chapters, the author carefully studies the grammar of 1 Corinthians 12 (e.g., passive voice and different prepositions) to highlight the Spirit as both the “divine source” and the “sovereign distributor” of the gifts (92). The author’s presentation of brief definitions and descriptions of the gifts of the Spirit, which is mainly based on word studies and literary context, is especially informative (93-96). One unique and commendable feature of the book is a plethora of transliterated Greek terms. Using the Greek New Testament as the primary source of the book, the author helpfully defines many Greek terms and illustrates their nuanced meanings throughout the book (e.g., *sphragizō* [“seal”], *arrabōn* [“deposit”], *panoplia* [“armor”], *pherō* [“carried along”]). Although the reader without any knowledge of Greek may find these transliterations unnecessary or distracting, the author makes sure to explain the terms clearly in English, often using vivid images and illustrations. More substantial studies of words and exegetical debates are footnoted.

All these features of the book stem from the author’s intention for the book to be read “comfortably and devotionally” (x). The book is well-organized and is written in a friendly, inviting tone, and has many memorable statements and questions that invite further reflection. For instance, the author writes that “salvation is a gift, purchased by Christ on the cross, granted by grace, and received by faith” (122)” and how we are “wondrously” adopted by the Spirit into God’s family

and through the Spirit we “joyously” cry out, “Abba, Father!” (122). The author then invites the reader to reflect: “Is your life before God an eternal love story or a never-ending list?” (123). But the book’s practical and devotional value shines most from its special emphasis on prayer. Every single chapter invites the reader to pray and seek the Spirit. The reader cannot miss the invitation to prayer, as the author repeatedly calls for prayer in the “pause for prayer” (beginning) and the “what does it mean for me?” (end) section of each chapter. After finishing each chapter, the reader is encouraged and challenged to respond to God’s word in prayer.

This reviewer recommends this book not only to seminary students, but to anyone especially with a Pentecostal or charismatic background who is looking for an accessible New Testament theology book on the Holy Spirit. A working knowledge of Greek will be certainly helpful for deeper engagement and further study, but it is not necessary as mentioned earlier. This book is highly recommended for any New Testament survey or theology class, and especially for a course like *Seminar in Pneumatology: Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, such as I enjoyed in seminary.

This book, a comprehensive and concise study of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament through a Pentecostal lens, is a timely addition to the study of the Holy Spirit, in light of the global growth and rising impact of Pentecostal and charismatic churches today. The book is a valuable resource for bridging the gap between the academy and the church and will both inform and transform the reader. The reader can expect not only to gain a greater knowledge of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, but to develop a greater sensitivity to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in everyday life and a more vibrant prayer life.

Dasol Chang is an ordained pastor who currently serves as Youth and Teaching Pastor at Korean Bethel Presbyterian Church in Beaverton, OR. He holds a B.S. in Psychology from Purdue University (West Lafayette, IN) and an M.Div. and a Th.M. (New Testament) from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (South Hamilton, MA).

Review of *Workplace Discipleship 101: A Primer* by David W. Gill (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2020)

JINSOOK KIM

Workplace Discipleship 101: A Primer is an introduction to help workplace disciples follow Jesus faithfully at their work. Dr. Gill argues that Jesus places important values on work and workers, and, since everyone works, work matters, yet many workplace disciples are neglected. Gill writes to equip workers how to prepare for work, how to live productive and fulfilling lives at their work, and what to do with themselves afterward. He hopes to decrease the Sunday-Monday gap.

All Christians should read this book: young and old, men and women, who want to glorify God at their workplaces. Gill is a pioneer in the faith at work, workplace disciples, engaged in work domains. This book comes out of Gill's fifty years of praying, learning, studying, teaching, and mentoring diverse workers and leaders. It contains biblical and practical wisdom and insights into embracing living and serving in the workplace. Gill has also included appendices for pastors: "The Workplace Disciples Pledge" and "Postscript for Pastors."

Gill starts with the question, what does it look like if Jesus is the Lord of all in the workplace? (13). According to Gill, workplaces are everywhere, in all the places where effort is made, whether paid or unpaid. Work involves the labor of serving, driving, communicating—even thinking. Gill asserts that we work because we are made in the image of God, and we represent him who is our creator, sustainer, and redeemer.

Gill's book is divided into three parts, examining "preparation" for work, our "presence" at work, and how to contribute "post-work" beyond the workplace. In the first part, Gill names five practices or daily habits that improve workplace discipleship. The first is to commit to our work, daily and yearly. We commit to aligning ourselves with God's mission, saying no to doing wrong things, and saying yes to good, exemplary work. The second practice is prayer. We can pray like Daniel, who prayed three times a day. Praying daily and proactively is essential because God is alive 24/7, and we need to invite God to rule and involve himself in our work every day, not only when in crisis. Further, Gill identifies three kinds of prayer: "emergency," "proactive and holistic," and "chatting" prayer throughout the day. The third practice involves listening to God and Scripture: listening through personal Bible reading, asking how we may cooperate with God's plan, reflect his character, and participate in his mission. It is essential to do this in listening communities. The fourth practice is to get partners who will support the work, like Christian "Posse," made up of those in covenant relationships. The creation story and the entire Scriptures show that we are meant to work together. We do not want to work alone: teams bring support, build trust and complementary skills, and are more fun. The fifth practice is also ongoing, as we learn, get wiser, and go deeper in developing job skills and becoming increasingly aware of what is going on in the world.

Part two discusses how to influence our workplaces so that we will work in the same way God works. Prof. Gill has five chapters on how we can "align," "model," be a "light," "share," and overcome conflicts. Alignment refers to working in agreement with God's work as part of being human. Our work is supposed to create something new. In our work we are to be productive, sustaining and supporting and bringing wisdom, promoting justice and goodness, proclaiming redemption, finishing well, and generally flourishing. Modeling this day-to-day, we will be a great example of ethical living, productivity, and encouraging others at work. Our character speaks louder than what we say. The three essential basics of a great model are becoming a righteous person, being a peace-maker, and bringing joy in tough times. The character of a workplace disciple is shown in wisdom, sexual purity, diligence, honesty, and generosity. To be a light at work is to share valuable biblical wisdom and insights at work. Sharing good biblical ideas with humility is one way to articulate our

wish to help people. Wherever we work we are to provide expertise, support, shared missions, collaboration, and live by the “golden rule” because every insight of biblical wisdom speaks to every work specialty. Gill believes that Christianity is not a “tribal religion,” rather it “reorients our whole life around a person, Jesus Christ,” and the gospel is for everyone. Sharing implies the need to find proper ways to share about Jesus at our workplace. Gill gives five sharing strategies: first, pay attention to colleagues and listen and come alongside them; second, invite them to outside events; third, attend and support events in the work community; fourth, engage others with discussion-starters; and fifth, start causal conversations, ask caring questions, and usher in opportunities for others to request our testimony.

Gill’s book talks about the positive aspects of the workplace, but also the more negative aspects like dealing with conflict and learning how to handle ethical issues. In these situations, Gill suggests asking God what is good and evil, and doing a deep analysis and response. Seeking shalom is not the absence of conflict but seeking to flourish together and applying the Beatitudes in our disputes. It is also essential to recognize serious wrongdoing in the workplace and to overcome it with good, but confrontation must be done with clarification and explicit guidelines. We need to be humble and practice exhortation instead of accusation.

Part three covers how to move beyond our workplaces to “contribute” and “rest.” Gill suggests that mature, established workers can contribute money, gifts, and materials to others to bless them, giving of time, teaching, tutoring, and financial planning. The Church should be like “a third force” to our neighbors to encourage, empower, and watch out for each other in tough times. The church can also work together to create jobs as entrepreneurs.

God wants us to work and rest, following his creation order. Sabbath provides important space for God and family, restoring our lives and living under Jesus’s Lordship. Rest helps us not to slip into workaholism and idolatry; as workplace disciples, we need to learn to relax and pay attention to God’s rhythms, even ceasing from good creative work. Gill encourages the reader to do some creative scheduling to map out a day for stopping and resisting the secular messages to overwork and accepting a day of holy delight.

Gill concludes that we can commit to following Jesus in our workplaces, wherever that work may be. By asking God to teach us and help us to find and create jobs, we will be enabled to work for the glory of God and the good of others. I recommend this book to seminary students and professors teaching courses in pastoral theology, introduction to the pastoral ministry, or any discipleship courses.

Jinsook Kim is a doctoral student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School researching a theology of work and workplace discipleship. She holds an M. Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Hamilton campus). She worked as a missionary with YWAM for 23 years. She spent most of her time studying, obeying, and teaching the Bible (Ezra 7:10) seeking how to connect God’s word to our world. She loves encouraging, empowering, and equipping God’s people into everyday workplace missionaries.

Review of *Abuelita Faith: What Women on the Margins Teach Us about Wisdom, Persistence, and Faith* by Kat Armas (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2021)

ANDRY THAIS ACEVEDO and JEANNE DEFazio

Author Kat Armas calls her Abuelita (“dear grandmother”) “the significant protagonista of her life and a strong devoted unrecognized theologian who served as the mother of her faith and a beacon of light on her spiritual journey” (11). Kat Armas wrote this book “to explore the topic of women and people of color as they pertain to theology” (3, 202 total pages), blending biblical accounts with family history, developing an effective testimony of Abuelita’s faith. The author dives into “the treasure chest of the collective, cultural memory of those who came before me” (21), viewing her work as a Latina theologian as “one of dissent against the dominant colonial culture of her ancestral Cuba.” She concludes that family history is painful, complicated, and uncomfortable to talk about (10), but Scripture provides a solution for every family challenge. Scripture and the abuelita theologians found within it remind us that wisdom is contextual (114).

Kat Armas holds an M.DIV. and M.A.T. from Fuller Theological Seminary. She has written for *Christianity Today* and *Sojourners*. She hosts the Protagonistas podcast where she highlights stories of everyday women of color. She speaks regularly on race and justice.

Beginning in chapter 1, “Research Grief,” Kat Armas, a second-generation Cuban from a Roman Catholic family, explains transitioning to Protestantism, while wrestling with Cuban identity in a majority white seminary community (3). Her study of Scripture convinces her to lead from the strength of Abuelita’s faith (5). She determines that “abuelita theology” stems from the reality that “in Latina religious culture, matriarchal figures such as abuelitas preserve and pass along religious traditions, beliefs and practices and spirituality” (33). She reminds us that Scripture attests to the influence of grandmothers among the people of God. As Paul in 2 Timothy 1:5 notes, “I am reminded of your authentic faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice” (34). In “Sabiduria that Heals,” the author explains that Abuelita gained wisdom (“sabiduria”) to pass along “through praying, reading and applying Scripture to everyday circumstances” (39). In “Mujeras of Exodus,” the author parallels her family’s exodus from Cuba to the Hebrew exodus from Egypt (53). Citing the John 4:9 account of the woman at the well, Armas explains that “the mujer at the well collaborates with God to seek the liberation of her people” (65). Through a narrative of dominoes as a family recreation, Kat Armas explains that the domino table was a life lesson: about “Telling La Verdad.” In “Cosiendo and Creating,” Abuelita’s clothing design becomes a sacred activity where creation connects the divine with the earth’s gifts (83). “Sobrevivendo” recounts the death of Abuelita’s second husband Mario and the dementia Abuelita experienced in the grief of his passing (100). Armas explains that Naomi in the Book of Ruth, like her Abuelita, needed family to survive (“sobrevivendo”) (101). Ruth and Abuelita’s stories show that God is on the side of oppressed women and the marginalized (115). “Protests and Persistence” cites a Rachel Costa poster: “all mothers were summoned when George Floyd cried out for his mama” (117). In “Desesperacion,” Abuelita’s effort to keep her diabetic child alive (145) is paralleled with the Canaanite woman’s confrontation with Jesus (Matt. 15:23) to keep her daughter alive. “Divine Baile’s” (“dance”) describes devotion to Salsa as a way of connecting with community and the divine (149). “Madre of Exile” cites Mary as a symbol of liberation through her powerful Magnificat (169). Armas ends her book citing Christina Garcia Alfonso’s “Resolviendo La Lucha” (“resolving the battle”) as maintaining and applying faith in Jesus “as la lucha of survival in which powerless people find power and agency to face their daily lives” (174).

This book is a tribute to marginalized matriarchs everywhere who have an intimate relationship with Jesus. Kat Armas offers this book as an invitation “not only to celebrate these women but to consider them genuine sources of theology” (11). The strength of this book is that it successfully parallels “Abuelita Faith” with the faith of biblical women. The author’s story is shaped by the challenge of the Cuban exile (171). From her Cuban American family experience is drawn a theology of liberation paralleling the experiences of immigrants and women of color. “I must look backward and tell the truth about our collective past and our sacred belonging” (80). In her words, God journeys alongside God’s people in “the messiness of what it means to be human” (172).

As a first-generation Puerto Rican in the United States, I, Andry, can relate my life experiences with the author’s. When I first started the Hispanic Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I felt out of place. I remember my first class was composed of pastors and bishops who were leading churches and councils and I felt so inadequate, and I had a sense of not belonging next to already-formed Christian leader figures. I was the only young woman in that class, and I felt disregarded by my classmates. Nonetheless, I kept praying and holding myself together until I transferred to Gordon-Conwell’s Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME) where I felt that I belonged and found many people just like me. The Lord gave me the strength and courage to withstand my own *lucha* (“battles”) just like Kat Armas’ abuelita did multiple times during her life.

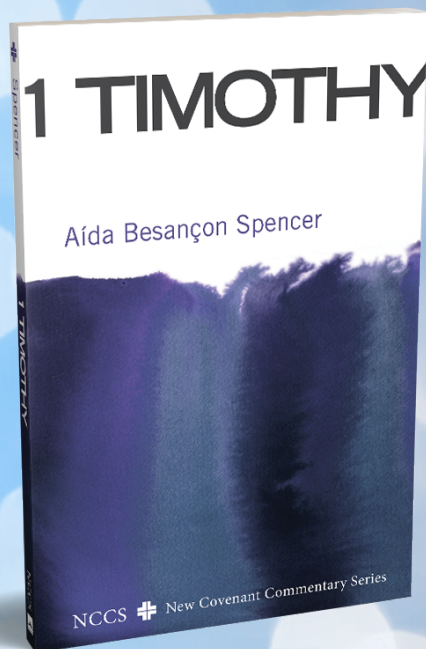
My own abuela was also an important theological figure of my life. My grandmother guided me towards God and the importance of maintaining an inner private life with the Lord through prayer and Bible study. Just like Armas, I saw my grandmother, my mother, and other strong women overcome different *luchas*, *situaciones desesperantes* (“difficult situations”), and how God led them to the right path to overcome such difficulties. I found no theological weakness and nothing to disagree with in this book. *Abuelita Faith* is a strong theological book that will open the eyes of seminarians to fight and advocate for the disadvantaged as Christians are called to do in the gospel of Christ. It is an intentional book whose main purpose is to give voice to those who are marginalized and forgotten by society and even sometimes by church. It is valuable as a resource for readers who reach out to all humans.

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Review of *Miracles Today: The Supernatural Work of God in the Modern World* by Craig S. Keener (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021)

JOHN LATHROP

The Bible is a book that contains many miracles, some of them God performed sovereignly without any human involvement, others he worked through his servants. But what about today? Does God still work miracles today? This is a question with which both Christians and non-Christians sometimes grapple. Craig Keener's book *Miracles Today* seeks to address the subject of post-biblical healings and miracles. Keener does this primarily by presenting a significant number of credible cases of healing and miracles that have taken place after the time of the first-century church. Many of the accounts in the book have occurred in relatively recent history.

As the back cover of the book indicates, the author is a seminary professor. He serves at Asbury Theological Seminary as the F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies. However, he is probably more widely known for the academic books he has written. Keener has written major biblical commentaries on a number of New Testament books. His commentary on the book of Acts is perhaps the most noteworthy; it is comprised of four volumes. His writing is consistently characterized by thorough research, copious documentation, and sound exegesis. In addition to his commentaries, he has also written books that are less academic in nature. With his wife, Méline, he wrote *Impossible Love*. This is a very personal book in which they share significant events in their lives and how they eventually married. He also wrote *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today*. This volume has great biblical substance but is easy to read.

A little over ten years ago Keener published a two-volume book that received a great deal of attention in the Christian world, even in the academic community. It was called *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Baker Academic, 2011). Part of the book contained accounts of miracles from different places in the world. The current volume, *Miracles Today*, picks up on the subject of the reality of the supernatural power of God in our world. Most of the material in this book has not been published before, but some accounts have come from his earlier volume on miracles and an article that was published in the *Bulletin for Biblical Research*¹ (x). One might question why the author would write a second book on the subject of miracles. Keener says he has recognized for years the need to write a shorter book on the subject; he knows that many people will likely not read all of his first book on miracles because it is 1,100 pages long (xviii). The current volume will likely be more widely read because it is considerably shorter, excluding the documentation, the main body of the book is about 250 pages.

After the acknowledgements, preface, and introduction, the book is divided into seven parts, followed by three appendixes. These are the seven major divisions of the book: "Part 1 Perspective on Miracles," "Part 2 Witnesses of Miracles," "Part 3 Videos and Doctors' Reports," "Part 4 'The Blind Receive Their Sight, the Lame Walk, the Lepers are Cleansed, the Deaf Hear' (Matt. 11:5// Luke 7:22)," "Part 5 'The Dead Are Raised' (Matt. 11:5//Luke 7:22)," "Part 6 Nature Miracles," and "Part 7 Kingdom Mysteries." Each part of the book consists of multiple chapters. On the low side, part 6 contains two chapters, on the high side, parts 3, 4, and 5 contain eight chapters each. The three appendixes are: "Did Prayer Make Things Worse?," "Some of Hume's Other Arguments," and "False Signs."

Near the beginning of the book, Keener deals with some preliminary issues. These are important matters that need to be considered before he proceeds to present the majority of the miracle accounts in the book. These issues have a direct bearing on the subject of the book. Since the book is about miracles, in the first chapter Keener addresses the matter of how one defines

1 Craig S. Keener, "The Dead are Raised' (Matthew 11:5//Luke 7:22): Resuscitation Accounts in the Gospels and Eyewitness Testimony," *BBR* 25 (1, 2015): 55-79.

a miracle. He notes that people define miracles differently (3, 4). He further states that often contemporary theologians speak of miracles as “special divine action” (4). Keener also addresses the matter of assumptions which he says impact one’s ability to recognize miracles (5, 7). Closely related to assumptions is the matter of a person’s worldview (Chapter 2). He also points out that a person can be conditioned to either believe or disbelieve in miracles (1).

Keener also identifies some of the things that people, at times, point to in their dismissal of miracles. These include the idea that belief in miracles is a “‘primitive’ worldview” (12), having been influenced by secular science (13) and the teachings of David Hume (Chapter 3). Some may find these arguments against miracles compelling. However, accepting them should be problematic for the Christian. Keener points out that a denial of the possibility of miracles conflicts with Scripture (15). Having said that, he notes that in certain sectors of the Western church some of the gifts of the Spirit are welcomed while others are not (15). Referencing the writings of Philip Jenkins and information from ministers in the Majority World, Keener presents the case that belief in the supernatural power of God is readily accepted in the Majority World (21). Many millions of people from all over the world have confessed to having seen cases of divine healing (25).

A significant part of *Miracles Today* is devoted to miracle accounts. As the table of contents indicates, a variety of miracles are chronicled. These include healing miracles, people being raised from the dead, and miracles in nature (Parts 3, 4, 5, and 6). Some miracles have been witnessed by doctors (26) and on occasion a miracle is caught on film (Chapter 8).

I found some of the accounts in this book to be especially powerful, I will mention only two. First, there is the amazing story of a Christian woman who suffered for sixteen years with multiple sclerosis (xii-xvi). The MS had taken a severe toll on her body. As you read the account of the parts of her body that were affected, you can get some idea of just how severe a case of MS she had. Her doctors had sent her home believing she would likely die (xiii). On Pentecost Sunday in 1981, while two friends were visiting her and reading letters to her, she was miraculously healed when she heard a voice say “My child: *Get up and walk*” (xiii). She understood that the Lord was speaking to her (xiii) and she obeyed: she got up (xiii-xiv). Second, is the account of a man in South America who was healed of paralysis. This man was not a Christian. He said that both his religion and Christianity were “garbage,” but, when he mentioned the name of Jesus, he was instantly healed and began loudly proclaiming what Jesus had done for him (32).

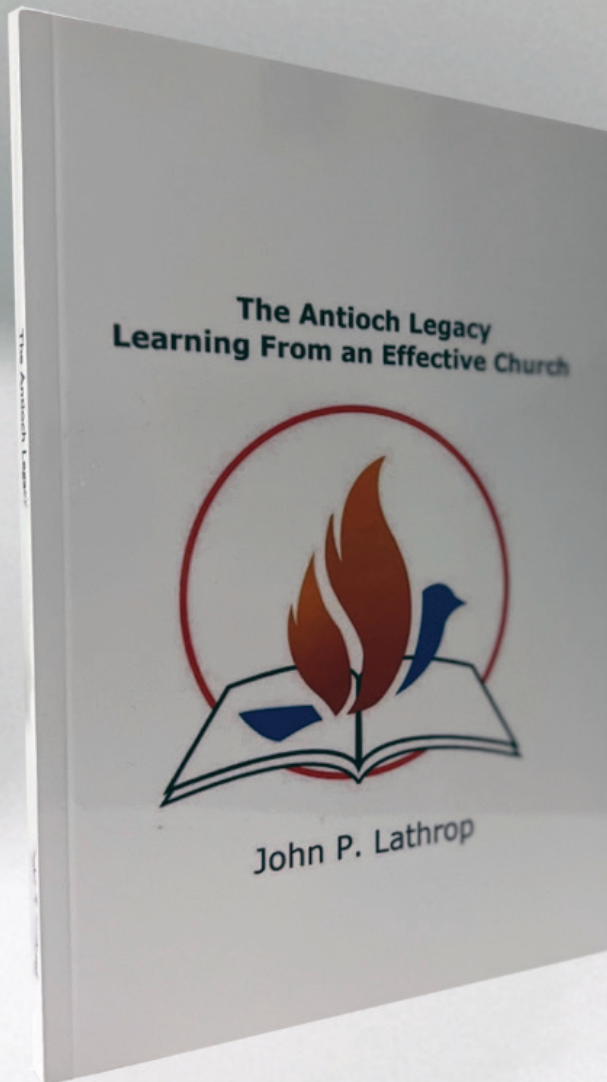
Keener acknowledges that miracles do not always occur, but that they do happen sometimes (4). This book demonstrates that there is credible evidence for miracles today. It makes a significant contribution to the theology of the church, perhaps especially to the Western church. This volume can serve as an encouragement to those of us who are Christians to believe what the Bible says about God and his power and to act in faith on these truths. After all, the Bible does speak about gifts of healing and miracles (1 Cor. 12:9-10) and encourages the elders of the church to pray for the sick (James 5:14). As Keener writes “Why should we suppose that Jesus, now that he has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), has become any less active where he is welcome?” (91). That is a good question.

I think *Miracles Today* would serve as a good supplemental text for a theology course or a course on practical ministry. Training the mind is an important part of theological education because the declaration and explanation of Scripture is vital for salvation, the discipleship process, and the spiritual health and wellbeing of the church. But, in addition to the ministry of the Word, we should also be believing God to do the works he did in Scripture, namely, healing and miracles, at times, using us, the members of his church, when he does them.

John P. Lathrop, a graduate of Western Connecticut State College, Zion Bible Institute, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (CUME), is an ordained minister with the International Fellowship of Christian Assemblies. He has written several books, and has had articles published in India, Indonesia, and the United States. He also served as co-editor of the book *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community* (Wipf & Stock, 2013).

What New Testament church is a good model for churches today?

One with commendable qualities is the congregation in Syrian Antioch.



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